



THE

SEEING THE DEAD

PHANTOM

in ANCIENT ROME

IMAGE

PATRICK R. CROWLEY

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THE

PHANTOM

IMAGE

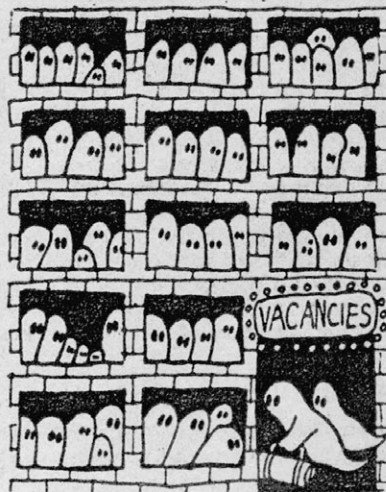
Overpopulation by Ghosts Is a Myth

To the Editor:

I wish to complain about a severe flaw in the mathematical reasoning used by Adrian Berry in his purportedly scientific article on ghosts (July 29). Mr. Berry cleverly demonstrates that all ghosts must have mass, and thence arrives at the false conclusion that only a finite number of ghosts can exist: "With an infinite number of ghosts, each possessing a small amount of mass, the surface of the world would be so intolerably crowded with ghosts that there would be no room on it for the living."

Not so. Suppose there were an infinite sequence of ghosts in which the second ghost weighs half as much as the first, the third half as much as the second and so on. Since the infinite series $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} \dots$ adds up to 2, we find that the total world ghost mass equals merely twice that of the first ghost in the series. If each ghost has the same density (mass divided by volume), then we may conclude: World Ghost Volume = $2 \times$ Volume of First Ghost, which will certainly leave living beings on earth plenty of room if the first ghost is of a manageable size.

It is utterly beyond me how such a



Brian Schatell

simple error could have slipped by the editors of The Times. This is surely not to the credit of your newspaper, and it leads one to imagine that the article in question, far from being the work of a serious scientist, was written purely tongue-in-cheek.

ETHAN TAUB

New Haven, July 29, 1980

A26

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 1980

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PHANTOM

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SEEING THE DEAD IN ANCIENT ROME

Patrick R. Crowley

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A little while after I began working on the topic of ghosts, a peculiar event had an unforeseen but outsize influence on the direction of this project. An elderly neighbor of mine, an emeritus professor, passed away in my building. While cleaning out the apartment, his family put stacks of his books in the foyer for anyone to take. As I leafed through several volumes, a clipping from the *New York Times*, lovingly pasted together to include both the date and section, slipped out and lazily fell onto the floor. The arresting caption, which I present here without comment, reads: “Overpopulation by Ghosts Is a Myth.” Some people would call this a mere coincidence; I am not one of those people.

It is difficult to imagine this project having taken the shape that it has anywhere besides the intellectually intense matrix of the University of Chicago. In the Department of Art History, I have profited enormously from colleagues whose intellectual dynamism has had a profound impact on both this project and my academic trajectory. I am especially indebted to my chair, Christine Mehring, who has offered unstinting support and encouragement at every turn. Huge thanks also to Richard Neer, who saw the potential of this project and offered invaluable constructive criticism along the way, as well as to my colleagues in our Center for Global Ancient Art: Claudia Brittenham and Seth Estrin (both of whom kindly

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INTRODUCTION

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and to the philosopher—the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute “opinions” implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968)¹

This is a book about seeing and depicting ghosts in ancient Rome. In particular it concerns certain evidentiary claims about ghosts and how the perceptual basis of those claims could be depicted and made visible in works of visual art. How, it asks, could the shadowy, quasi-insubstantial nature of the ghost be conveyed through the obdurate materiality of stone or paint? And how can pictorial strategies at once disclose and inform ways of seeing? Starting from the basic premise that the ancient vocabulary for ghosts was largely coextensive with that for images and pictures in the broadest possible sense—whether perceptual, imaginative, or depictive—it situates the ghost at the very heart of epistemological concerns about depiction and

vision in classical antiquity. Drawing on a rich corpus of funerary monuments including mythological sarcophagi, tomb painting, and floor mosaics, *The Phantom Image* charts the material conditions of possibility for a historical phenomenology of images and pictures—that is to say, of ghosts—in Roman art and visual culture.

In order to outline the broad contours of my argument, I advance two general theories of the ghost: first, *ancient depictions of ghosts operate in a circular or recursive fashion in the sense that they depict the challenge of depiction and even of seeing itself, giving physical form to conflicting and overlapping systems of knowledge and classification*. It is telling, as I have already indicated, that the vocabulary for ghosts in classical antiquity overlapped with that for images and pictures: *eidōlon* or *phantasma*, for example, in Greek; *hinthial* in Etruscan; *imago*, *simulacrum*, *umbra*, *effigies*, *species*, or *figura* in Latin, among others.² The strong and robust correlation between ghosts, images, and pictures on the level of language admits of several interrelated problems that I unpack, among them: What can this shared linguistic usage tell us about how the ancients conceptualized the ghost as such? Indeed, what is a ghost? What *counts* as a ghost? Further, if ghosts, images, and pictures were somehow interdefinable, then what is the evidentiary status of depictions *of* ghosts? Were they regarded in some sense as pictures *of* images?³ Or, in a somewhat vertiginous fashion, as depictions of the visual event of seeing pictures, of imaging pictures? And if so, how might the evidence of such metapictoriality show us how these terms are correlated through constitutively visual means?

Second, while the imagistic and pictorial reflexivity of ghosts can be seen, for example, as early as the sixth century BCE in certain Greek vases, *there is a marked shift in terms of how this reflexivity takes shape in the cultural climate of the Second Sophistic when the fascination with Greek myth, philosophy, religion, and art played a crucial role in the shaping of an emergent historical self-consciousness in the Roman Empire*.⁴ Within this cultural milieu, a veritable renaissance of classicizing stylizations of Greek arts and letters beginning roughly from the second half of the first century CE up through the early third century, both visual and verbal tactics of referentiality signified the cultivation of *paideia*, or education, itself. Among the many lessons that *paideia* teaches is the power of such antiquarian strategies to recursively conjure up bygone historical forms of life governed by a spectral logic of untimely chronologies in which the present, the past, and the future they promise are mutually implicated. Significantly, the Second Sophistic is not a modern historical periodization, but was coined and chronicled by the Elder Philostratus, who thematized the spectrality of its anachronisms in his *Heroicus*. Here the ghost of Protesilaus, a minor character in the *Iliad* whose only claim to fame was that he was the first to die as soon as he landed on Trojan soil, supplies inquiring minds with myriad details that Homer “forgot” to mention in his epic poem.⁵ The point here, to borrow from Jacques Derrida’s coinage of “hauntology” (and its near-homonym



Fig. 0.1 Philosopher sarcophagus, early third century CE. Museo Provinciale Campano di Capua. Photo: DAI Inst. Neg. 32.368.

ontologie in French), seems to be that “haunting is historical to be sure, but it is not *dated*, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar.”⁶

An early third-century sarcophagus from Capua offers a concrete example of how these two theories might come together in one and the same object (fig. 0.1).⁷ At the center of the front panel is a common motif seen on many other sarcophagi and ash-chests: the entrance to Hades, depicted as a temple façade with a half-open door whose recessed panels are decorated with gorgon heads—apotropaic symbols whose pernicious gaze polices the boundary between life and death. On other doorway sarcophagi, mythological figures such as Hermes or Hercules sometimes appear in their liminal aspect as “Psychopomps,” or conductors of souls.⁸ Here it is instead a ghost, its ambiguously gendered body tightly wrapped in the carapace of a mantle, perhaps even a burial shroud, who emerges from the Underworld. Flanking the doorway and its ghostly figure of indeterminate gender are two symmetrical scenes that by contrast are emphatically gendered. On the left, the matron stands between a female statue herm and a veiled female attendant while holding a scroll in her left hand and raising her right hand in a gesture of greeting or address. On the right, the patron likewise holds a scroll and stands between a male attendant and a male statue herm.

Traditional interpretations of funerary iconography, especially the kind that incorporates elements such as a half-open door to the Underworld, would be geared toward eschatological questions about the deceased and their beliefs about the afterlife. For example: Does the small bird by the matron’s feet symbolize her apotheosis

or the transmigration of her soul? Alas, the imagery does not supply easy answers to such complicated questions. Indeed, it is not even clear whether the ghostly figure departing from Hades corresponds to the deceased husband, his wife, or neither, standing in as rather a figure of thought *about* such questions of identification and representation in a way that seems structurally similar to the presence of the two herm portraits that frame the scene. By and large, the scholarship on Roman funerary monuments has begun to move away from these older interpretive frameworks about the private convictions of patrons encoded through abstruse symbolism in favor of a greater emphasis on viewer response.⁹ This is all well and good, but here I am especially interested in how the ghost opens up a related set of questions in a particular way: namely the relations between *visuality*, or the historical and cultural determinations of vision and visibility, and *pictoriality*, which concerns not only the case of depictive intentionality (e.g., a sculptor who carves a block of stone for it to be seen and understood in a distinctive way), but also the intentionality of beholding—of seeing or recognizing depictive intentionality regardless of whether it is actually present.¹⁰

Other ways of looking at the imagery drawing from the two theories I outline above may bring different issues into play. For example, one could say that the central scene is all *about* vision and the conditions of visibility: the deathly, petrifying stare of the gorgon heads, the heavy drapery whose topography negotiates the relations between concealment and revelation, and even the motif of the half-open door that alludes to the unseen interior of the casket itself. Further, if the self-fashioning of the deceased was focused on the intellectual cultivation of philosophy and rhetoric, indicated by the conspicuous display of the scrolls and portrait herms that stand in for the world of *paideia*, then how does one square this with the presence of a ghost? This, after all, was precisely the kind of superstitious entity that intellectuals, men and women “of solid understanding and philosophic training,” as Plutarch remarks of Dion and Brutus, who had both admitted to seeing ghosts, were not supposed to believe in.¹¹ Paul Veyne once coined the delightful phrase “balkanisation des cerveaux” (“brain-balkanization”) to capture the paradoxical phenomenon of a “plurality of modalities of belief,” or the capacity to believe contradictory things simultaneously.¹² But with regard to the evidence of objects, rather than texts, significant methodological challenges remain: How do we “read off” beliefs from objects in ways that may or may not correspond to the ways we do so with texts? What is at stake when we treat these objects as the material supports of beliefs in such a way that denies them any agency in the historical process by which modalities of belief (or unbelief) emerge and develop within a prescribed framework of possibilities?¹³

BEFORE BELIEF

One of the most significant explanatory decisions I've made in this book is to bracket out the category of belief as the primary lens through which to examine a range of artistic practices and aesthetic discourses that converge on what we would now classify under the rubric of the supernatural. As I explain below, I return to the issue of belief toward the very end of the book in order to make the case for a major transformation in the stakes of belief in the Christianizing milieu of late antiquity. My decision thus has little to do with any attempt to artificially and anachronistically impose a modern, secularizing grid onto antiquity, much less to insist that the category of belief is somehow inconsequential or irrelevant. Yet all too often in the study of ancient funerary art and religious studies more generally, depictions tend to be regarded as—choose your metaphor—mere reflections, illustrations, windows, or symptoms of ancient belief-patterns. Oftentimes such arguments operate by a circular logic whereby the esoterica of, say, Orphic or Pythagorean beliefs are invoked to explain the pictures that in turn serve as the evidentiary basis for our understanding of those same beliefs. By contrast, I am rather interested in how the figure of the ghost might contribute to a broader historiographic project that can account for the conditions of possibility in which certain modalities of belief or unbelief emerged—in short, not what was “beyond” belief so much as what was *before* belief: what made believing in this or that thing possible in the first place.¹⁴ Second, and just as important, the evidentiary basis of my claims is primarily based on a corpus of underexploited visual evidence that bears upon the topic in ways that are sometimes parallel, but at other times conflicting, with the evidence of ancient texts.

My emphasis on questions of evidence, especially questions of *visual* evidence, bears out some distinctions of method from previous work. What Thomas Kuhn would have called “normal science” in the field of classical art and archaeology usually proceeds by compiling a corpus of iconographic examples, the preponderance of which (often graphed, tabulated, or charted in a manner that resembles the style of thinking and publication in the social sciences) cashes out in such a way as to reduce their significance computationally to a function of mere quantification, rather than a careful consideration of the manifold effects that particular pictures might generate for a given beholder.¹⁵ Such a method certainly has its uses, but is fundamentally ill equipped to handle the sorts of questions I am asking here, not least because it is difficult to circumscribe the iconographic criteria for what “counts” as a ghost in Roman art and visual culture. While literary studies have retrospectively typologized ghosts into handily discrete categories modeled after modern ones (e.g., poltergeists, revenants, etc.), the visual material presents a

unique challenge in the sense that it tends to resist the serial quality on which the recognition and classification of iconography depends.¹⁶ Although iconography is hardly fashionable as an end unto itself in contemporary art-historical practice (with the notable exception, perhaps, of ancient and especially pre-Christian art), it cuts straight to the heart of questions about depiction and the history of vision that I address throughout this book—questions that converge on the matter of pictoriality.¹⁷ Many, if not most, of the objects I discuss here might each be labeled a *unicum*, a one-off. Yet, as I discuss in particular detail with respect to some rare themes on Roman mythological sarcophagi in chapter 3, what makes them statistically insignificant from an ostensibly “scientific” point of view is precisely and conversely what makes them art-historically significant. My wager is that just as there was no orthodoxy of iconography, there was no orthodoxy of belief.

In contradistinction to the widely regarded status of belief as an essential constituent of knowledge in modern epistemology, the category of belief simply did not hold a candle to that of knowledge in the ancient world.¹⁸ Across a variety of philosophical schools, belief was widely regarded to be inferior to knowledge, which was itself held to a higher standard of proof than how we generally speak of it today. Certain schools of thought were stricter on this point than others. A case in point is Pyrrhonian skepticism—a version of the kind of skepticism as practiced in the Academy that pursued the Socratic investigation of truth and knowledge, but with the added feature of the pre-Socratic interest in the evidentiary value of appearances. For them, “true beliefs” were really no better than “false beliefs,” since both were deemed to be based on hasty judgments that inevitably fell short of real knowledge. According to this philosophical outlook, beliefs in general were regarded as what Katja Vogt has called “deficient cognitive attitudes.”¹⁹ While it may be objected that skepticism is perhaps an extreme case even within a somewhat rarefied philosophical outlook, I hope to show that it was brought to bear in some pertinent, if sometimes implicit and unexpected, ways, alongside other *explananda* across a wider social spectrum.

A related problem has to do with the category of belief as an interpretive framework. As Jean-Claude Schmitt writes in the introduction to his classic study of ghosts in the Middle Ages, “Historians and ethnologists commonly speak of a ‘belief in ghosts.’ But what does this really mean, and how can the historian ascertain past beliefs?”²⁰ For Schmitt, drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau and the “histoire des mentalités” of his fellow Annalists, it is imperative that, to be heuristic, belief not be reified, lest it become “something established once and for all, something that individuals and societies need only express and pass on to each other. It is appropriate to substitute a more active notion for the term ‘belief’: the verb ‘to believe.’”²¹ In this linguistic analogy, Schmitt classifies all manner of “docu-

ments,” whether in the form of texts or illustrations, as “utterances” and “enunciations” of beliefs as if they were speech-acts that occurred under a specific set of historical conditions.

Again, this is all well and good, but it essentially leaves the category of belief intact as part of the historian’s conceptual toolkit. In Schmitt’s history of Christian ghost-belief in medieval Europe, however, the retention and even privileging of belief makes a good deal of sense. For as he shows, ghosts were not simply derided or tolerated by religious authorities as the simpleminded delusions of popular folk. Instead, they were rigorously folded into an entire cosmic and theological program. Accordingly, a belief in ghosts fit quite naturally into a system that promulgated a belief in bodily resurrection and, by the twelfth century, in purgatory. The situation changed considerably after the Reformation, which had the major effect of separating the living from the dead.²² This occurred not only on a psychological level, with the doctrine of purgatory being denied as an explanatory possibility for Protestants who claimed to have seen ghosts, but on a physical and spatial one as well, as bodies were increasingly buried outside Lutheran towns, whereas they had once been interred in close proximity to houses and churches within the city walls.

More problematic, however, is the applicability of the category of belief to antiquity. For unlike Christianity, whose entire religion was founded on the bedrock of belief and faith, Roman religion, which had no orthodoxy, was based instead on the principle of orthopraxy in which ritual actions were followed to the letter, closely observed, and then analyzed to determine their efficaciousness with regard to the desired outcome.²³ In short, it has been argued, the Romans did not have belief; they had knowledge, and an empiricist form of knowledge at that. If the question of what belief has to offer the study of Roman religion and its orientation to the gods has been problematic, the question of how belief pertains to the ghostly seems even more uncertain. For unlike the gods, ghosts were never honored with temples, cult statues, or the traditional bounty of sacrifice. Like the gods, however, ghosts could be endowed with a mythological pedigree, regarded as quasi-divine (as attested, for example, in the ubiquitous and formulaic references to the *manes*, or the ancestral “spirits of the dead” on Latin epitaphs), and appeased or propitiated in festivals (such as the Roman *Lemuria*). Sometimes the divine and ghostly worlds converge.²⁴ In Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*, for example, the suggestion is made that Claudius’s deification would be akin to deifying a ghost, and by the end of the satire the bumbling emperor is escorted by Hermes to the realm of the shades, where he is punished with a ludicrously Sisyphian task. In Philostratus’s aforementioned *Heroicus*, the ghost of Protesilaus haunts the plains of his home in the Thracian Chersonese. Surprisingly, we learn that his ghost is not feared but actually revered by the locals, who regarded him as a hero and even left votive dedications on

the statue that rests above his tomb. However tongue-in-cheek these stories were supposed to be, their very existence depends upon the acknowledgment of a certain affinity (but not so far as an assimilation) between gods and ghosts and the kinds of credulity that could be attached to them.

But the problem of belief extends beyond such ostensible similarities. It is not enough, I argue, to reconfigure ancient ghost-belief in terms of looking, as Schmitt does in the Middle Ages, for “enunciations” of belief, or belief in action. For even as it shrewdly avoids reifying the category of belief as a preordained given, such an approach betrays a tacitly Christian way of thinking about and moving through the world—one that is, for reasons I have already indicated, inappropriate to the matter at hand. It was Augustine, the Christian cleric and thinker writing in Carthage at the turn of the fifth century, who defined belief as “thinking with assent.”²⁵ What was so radical about Augustine’s statement was his assertion that “assent,” an important term in Stoic epistemology whereby we “assent to” or accept the validity of a given proposition or perception, operates at the same time as thought. In other words, Augustine adapted the Stoic language of assent while putting it to other ends (namely, a question of the will, *voluntas*) that were deeply informed by his own theological commitments. I shall return to Augustine’s idiosyncratic characterization of belief in the final chapter of this book, which examines the episode of the apostle Thomas and his famous doubt or incredulity as to whether he had truly perceived the resurrected body or only a mere ghost of Christ. But the main point I wish to make here is that this voluntaristic way of thinking about belief as a kind of preprocessing of the data that are simultaneously presented for consideration is itself historically specific, and that it emerged out of a certain set of circumstances that allowed it to become an intellectually available concept.

In place of a belief in ghosts, therefore, I am interested rather in exploring the diverse and competing strategies of persuasion and standards of proof that were necessary to arrive at and hold such convictions in the first place. My procedure will instead adopt a more historicizing approach, one that draws on some key questions raised by historical epistemology, a strain of conceptual history practiced especially by philosophers and historians of science.²⁶ Specifically, I am interested in what Arnold Davidson has called the “conditions of validity” and “styles of reasoning” that constitute and govern the ways in which facts are produced, evidence is adduced, and judgments are made in a given historical epoch.²⁷ Crucial to this historical enterprise is the conviction that such problems are perhaps compatible with, but ultimately irreducible to, the social (i.e., that facts and even truth itself, however we define it, are not merely ideological deposits or “social constructions”). In other words, as Lorraine Daston cogently defines it, historical epistemology “asks the Kantian question about the preconditions that make thinking this or that idea possible.”²⁸

Historians of science often speak of “theory-ladenness” to describe how observations can be informed by a priori theories, rather than stand as purely objective registrations of visible phenomena. In other words, the idea is that we sometimes see what we expect or are conditioned to see and that, in a vertiginously recursive fashion, the theories themselves are developed in response to what is seen (as evidenced by the oft-remarked Greek origin of the word “theory” itself—*theōria*, or “viewing”). The crux of the problem, as Daryn Lehoux writes in his compelling new work on ancient Roman science, is that “the farther back we go, the less likely we are to have any bare observation reports, lab notes, or rough work. Instead we have to rely more and more on final versions of observations as always already synthesized into arguments.”²⁹ The matter expands beyond the observational experience of historical actors to include the corresponding disposition of the historian. How one chooses to approach and analyze these arguments, and even the question of what one hopes to find, profoundly affects how they are perceived to cash out in terms of their historical significance.

A case in point can be found in the work of E. R. Dodds, the prominent Hellenist of the twentieth century who sought to restore the ancient psychological category of the irrational. For Dodds, this was a matter of historicizing the underlying experiences of ancient “belief-patterns.” Amazingly, Dodds took quite seriously the possibility that, for example, some ancient people genuinely dreamed so-called “epiphany dreams” in which a god or even the ghost of a dead person might deliver a message in a nocturnal visitation, and that this was not a product of mere poetic invention or convention. Needless to say, Dodds wasn’t trying to prove that the pagan gods are real or that ghosts really exist. Instead, his aim was to examine the historicity of these experiences. To do so, he developed a positivistic method to retrospectively diagnose which historical experiences were more or less plausible, those that were impossible, and others that were plainly crazy. Consider, for example, the following set of criteria he established for the study of ancient accounts that featured such “supernormal” categories as “telepathy and clairvoyance,” “precognition,” and “‘mediumistic’ and allied states”:³⁰

Suppose a phenomenon X to be accepted as occurring in modern Europe and America under conditions ABC and only under these; if it be recorded as occurring at another time or place under conditions BCD, then there is a presumption that neither the presence of A nor the absence of D is necessary to its occurrence. In such a case, since the conditions are partially identical, we have some assurance that the earlier report is not just a piece of free invention. And if that is so, the element of difference can be highly instructive. For it can show us which of the conditions are causally connected with the phenomenon and which are merely reflections of a contemporary pattern of belief.

Today, we might consider Dodds's statement into its own historical and intellectual context, above all its publication in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* published by an organization (for which he even served as its president from 1960 to 1963) dedicated to the ostensibly "scientific" understanding of the supernatural that had its start in late nineteenth-century Britain and featured a surprising number of widely respected classicists in its heyday. Yet, while Dodds was perhaps a vestigial remainder of this strange marriage between Spiritualism and classical scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his general approach—specifically, the implementation of an empirical method to validate or falsify a range of ancient experiences—has retained much of its currency in contemporary classical scholarship.

Proving the historicity of experience is an intriguing, if daunting, proposition, but it is not mine.³¹ To argue that some ancient people genuinely thought they saw ghosts—again, a separate question from whether ghosts exist—would seem to run the risk of reifying the category of experience on the one hand even while professing to historicize it on the other. By investigating instead how experiences were mobilized to craft arguments—specifically, how the basis of experience was used to produce facts, and how the resultant facts, when called upon to support a claim, attained the status of evidence—I hope to uncover not only the "theory-ladenness" of experience, but also the corresponding mechanisms of classification that betokened its explanatory power. Today we tend to think of facts as brute "nuggets" of information that are incontestable as such and are thus beyond reproach in and of themselves.³² Yet it was plainly possible for the ancients to deem as "fact" certain things that they claimed were based on their own experiences, and yet would seem preposterous or unacceptably subjective to modern sensibilities.

Again, this is not to say that facts (even now in the age of the so-called "post-modern fact") are merely social constructions. It is rather that, as Lehoux observes, certain knowledge-claims made by the ancients—and indeed, by us moderns—were deemed so obviously "true" based on inferences from their experiences (which, in the twinkle of an eye, become interchangeable with the experiences themselves) that they never needed to be tested empirically, thus creating an "epistemological blind spot."³³ It is only when two such claims are in conflict with each other, each being based on the same, overlapping data of experience, that the necessity of an empirical test becomes itself visible. What produces the epistemological blind spot is therefore hardly ignorance or even an insufficient data set, but rather the classificatory systems that make certain ideas possible or plausible, or that allow things to be seen in a particular light. In other words, it has less to do with historicizing experience than with historicizing the structuring principles of the classifications themselves. In the section that follows, I examine a key piece of literary testimony

that foregrounds a number of evidentiary questions that are interwoven throughout this book.

PLINY'S GHOST LETTER AND THE RHETORIC OF GHOST-SEEING

Around the turn of the second century CE, Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to his friend Licinius Sura about a matter he'd been ruminating on for some time:

Our leisure time gives me the chance to learn and you to teach me; so I should very much like to know whether you think that ghosts (*phantasmata*) exist, and have a form of their own (*propriam figuram*) and some sort of supernatural power, or whether they lack substance and reality and take shape (*imaginem accipere*) only from our fears.³⁴

For many, I suspect, Pliny's question to Sura might now seem surprisingly, even shockingly, modern. It's too psychologizing, too clinical—in a word, too *rational*. Even if, as scholars have long taken for granted, the educated Roman elite didn't put much stock in the ghost stories that nurses told their young charges at bedtime (a few of which Pliny goes on to recount), there is nevertheless something about the *way* that Pliny poses his question, or the way that he frames it, that somehow feels out of step with his own time and intellectual milieu. It may be objected, not unfairly, that this would constitute an anachronistic reading of Pliny's letter, and that it begs the question in several key respects. Needless to say, Pliny was not a harbinger of the Enlightenment—not least because he ultimately admits to being inclined to admit to the existence of ghosts based on mere hearsay.

Consider, however, the opening of a letter written to Baruch Spinoza by a certain Hugo Boxel on 14 September 1674. "Most esteemed Sir," Boxel writes:

My reason for writing to you is that I should like to know your opinion of apparitions and specters, or ghosts; and if they exist, what you think regarding them, and how long they live, for some think that they are immortal, while others think that they are mortal. In view of my doubt as to whether you admit their existence, I shall proceed no further. However, it is certain that the ancients believed in their existence. Theologians and philosophers of our times still believe in the existence of creatures of this kind, although they do not agree as to the nature of their essence.³⁵

The resemblance between the two letters is uncanny, but not, as it turns out, coincidental. For in the ensuing correspondence between the two men, Boxel cites

specific literary testimony of the ancients in his rejoinder to Spinoza's disbelief: "Besides those I have mentioned, you can look up, if you please, the younger Pliny, Book 7, his letter to Sura . . ." ³⁶

Very soon it becomes clear that there is much more at stake than reviving an ancient debate. What emerges in their epistolary dialogue is a critical transition from a question of belief to a question of knowledge. In his first reply to Boxel's letter, Spinoza asks his friendly opponent to produce the very best and most credible evidence he can (in the form of a story or eyewitness account) that would prove the existence of ghosts. Then, and this is what constitutes the real paradigm shift here, Spinoza admits his own ignorance on the matter and demands a more rigorous consideration of the first principles of the discussion, starting with a working definition of what a ghost even is:

I still do not know what they (i.e., ghosts) are, and no one has ever been able to inform me. Yet it is certain that in the case of a thing so clearly demonstrated by experience we ought to know what it is; otherwise we can hardly conclude from a story that ghosts exist, but only that there is something, but no one knows what it is. If philosophers want to call these things we do not know "ghosts," I shall not be able to refute them, for there are an infinite number of things of which I have no knowledge. ³⁷

There are echoes of Plato's *Theaetetus* in Spinoza's reply to Boxel, particularly in Socrates's complaint about the slipperiness of the argument in which "we have said over and over again 'we know' and 'we do not know' and 'we have knowledge' and 'we have no knowledge,' as if we could understand each other, while we were still ignorant of knowledge; and at this very moment, if you please, we have again used the terms 'be ignorant' and 'understand,' as though we had any right to use them if we are deprived of knowledge." ³⁸ Needless to say, it is evidently not the case that Spinoza has no inkling of what a ghost is, that he doesn't understand what the word means. It is rather that he wants to develop a concept of ghosts, one that is informed by the experiences—very clearly demonstrated ones, he pointedly mentions—that people ascribe to them. In short, he is saying that it is impossible to confirm or deny the existence of something that one doesn't have any real knowledge of in the first place. Otherwise, all we can say is that *there is something*, an unsatisfactory statement by any measure.

Crucially, the stakes of Pliny's question are grounded in the sociology of knowledge: "Our leisure time (*otium*) gives me the chance to learn and you to teach me . . ." With these very first words in his ghost letter to Sura, Pliny foregrounds the social privileges that shape and frame the intellectual stakes of his inquiry. For in Roman ideology, *otium* entails far more than simply free time—it includes nothing less than a whole psychological world of personal growth and enrichment that

was more or less compartmentalized from the world of *negotium*, the gritty affairs of business and politics that comprised the duties and commitments to the Roman state.³⁹ Traditionally, this division has been understood in terms of a division between private and public life, one that was spurred by the incorporation of Greek lands into the Roman Empire. During the transition from republic to empire, the aristocratic classes in Rome began to enjoy new pathways to self-fulfillment whose most salient and defining feature was an immersion in the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures of Greek culture. The site of this acculturation was equally important, occurring notably at country villas (as for example with Pliny's own retreat at Laurentinum, which he describes in other letters, and where one of the ghost stories may even take place) whose very location away from the demands of public life in the metropolitan center both signified and made possible the kinds of pursuits that it was meant to generate and sustain.

More recently, it has been argued that perhaps too stark a picture has been painted in this conceptual division between *otium* and *negotium* and its concomitant divisions between private and public, Greek and Roman. Eleanor Windsor Leach has drawn attention to the historically shifting understanding of *otium* in Roman ideology, and how Pliny in particular seems to have redefined the temporal economy of *otium* from its earlier republican configurations.⁴⁰ Whereas *otium* had previously betokened a certain susceptibility to the morally degenerative effects of material *luxuria* or even the less visible, if no less insidious, perils of wasted time, Leach shows how Pliny "reinvents the Roman significance of *otium* for his social and political context, as luxury time, and associates it with cultural production in such a way as to confer distinction on aristocratic life." Luxury time for Pliny is hardly vacation time in the simplistic sense of rest and recreation. Whether it involves reading, composing verse, exercise, or bathing, the important thing is that this time spent away from presiding over judicial hearings or other official matters entails a strict regimen of scheduled and assiduously observed activity. Most of all, it is embedded within a political economy of social reciprocity among aristocrats who come to regard it as the chief reward for their spent labor. Spending one's *otium* wisely—indeed, by effectively treating it as yet another form of labor—thus projects a veneer of power and authority at a time when a virtually neutered aristocracy under the shadow of imperial power was in danger of succumbing to apathy, lassitude, and irrelevance.

Within this context, debating the existence of ghosts with another aristocrat, not to mention a presumably like-minded aristocratic readership, amounted to more than a simple intellectual diversion: it was thoroughly enmeshed in discourses of power, influence, and self-fashioning. After all, it wasn't just *any* aristocrat whose advice or knowledge Pliny was seeking: Licinius Sura enjoyed a widely respected career as a celebrated advocate, orator, and patron of the arts who had also served as

ordinary consul no less than three times (an unprecedented achievement to anyone outside the imperial family) and was a close friend and confidant of the emperor Trajan himself. A near-obsession with the matter of status, rank, and the authority they confer on the reliability of eyewitness testimony runs through Pliny's letter from beginning to end. As we shall see, the questions of what one sees and how one comes to see it are thoroughly implicated in corresponding questions of who saw what and why it is that that person warrants the trust of Sura and the reader, who serve as judge and jury. And indeed, at several points the language of rhetoric is brought to bear in the attempt to make precisely these kinds of determinations. Although Pliny poses his question to Sura in such a way that lends it a tone of grave seriousness or at least earnestness, it is remarkable that Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, has one of his interlocutors blithely explain—after the other laments that he would not be able to have his retainer of Roman advocates defend him in the court of Hades before the Greek judges of the Underworld—that it would be a simple matter to refute the existence of ghosts. Invoking the overlapping language of labor and rhetoric, it is remarkable that he emphasizes the credibility of visual evidence in particular: “What trouble (*negotii*) is there in proving (*convincere*) the falsity of these monstrosities of poets and painters?”⁴¹

Despite Pliny's preoccupation with the relationship between testimony and social status, it is significant that he doesn't seek to exclude or denigrate the testimony of others based on this criterion alone, or that he would be content to let it go uninvestigated or unqualified. For his part, Pliny explains that he was rather inclined to believe in the existence of ghosts on the basis of what he had heard about the experience of a certain Curtius Rufus, who had twice witnessed a daytime vision that portended his own death. To this he adds two more stories: one about a Stoic philosopher's terrifying ordeal in a haunted house in Athens, and another about Pliny's own freedman who dreamed that he had seen someone cutting his hair, only to find that his own hair had actually been shorn upon waking the next morning—an experience that recurred shortly thereafter to another member of the household. What makes the philosopher's brush with the ghost so compelling is the fact that he is presented as a cold-blooded rationalist whose initial disbelief is overturned by the weight of the evidence in front of him—evidence, as we shall see, that is above all rooted in both a philosophical and rhetorical understanding of visual perception and persuasion.

The cases of Curtius Rufus and the freedman, however, are more complicated. As we know from Tacitus, Rufus had an unconventional pedigree.⁴² Thanks to his personal relationship with the emperor Tiberius, who regarded Rufus, a former military man, as “the creation of himself,” he bested a number of patrician competitors for the office of praetor and ascended the social ranks while at the same time

showing little regard for those he had left behind, let alone his equals. It's not surprising, then, that rumors began to swirl about the precise nature of Rufus's humble origins, a matter on which Tacitus has simultaneously very much and very little to say: "As to the origin of Curtius Rufus, whom some have described as the son of a gladiator, I would not promulgate a falsehood and I am ashamed to investigate the truth." If true, the rumor of his parental lineage would be damaging indeed, since gladiators, although beloved in the arena, hadn't a shred of social status to speak of. Pliny doesn't sweat the details of Rufus's biography in his letter, but it's doubtful whether this is because he intentionally wishes to suppress anything detrimental about Rufus's character that would unduly throw suspicion on his otherwise credible testimony. Indeed, the opposite seems true, given the fact that Pliny pointedly mentions that Rufus's vision occurred in Africa "while he was still obscure and unknown," suggesting that this is a man for whom neither Sura nor his readers need any introduction.

Pliny's freedman, by contrast, is explicitly defined and constituted by his servile past. What makes him a trustworthy source is the fact that he is learned—*non inlitteratus*. And of course, the ultimate rubber stamp on the testimony of this freedman is the fact that, being Pliny's former slave, the master's own judgment—one that "counts" for much more, we may easily surmise—is likewise at stake. Pliny even stresses this connection in order to enhance its credibility: "For these details [regarding the stories about Rufus and the philosopher] I rely on the evidence (*adfirmantibus*) of others, but here is a story I can vouch for (*adfirmare*) myself."⁴³ Interestingly, the language of corroboration (*adfirmare*) seems to belong less to the sphere of jurisprudence than to historical writing. Livy, for example, invokes it powerfully at the beginning of his *History of Rome*: "Such traditions as belong to the time before the city was founded, or rather was presently to be founded, and are rather adorned with poetic legends than based upon trustworthy historical proofs, I purpose neither to affirm nor to refute (*nec adfirmare nec refellere*)."⁴⁴ It is hardly an issue that Pliny does not see or experience any of this for himself. Like any good historian, he establishes the credibility of his primary source, his educated freedman. Crucially, it is only when he introduces the secondary piece of testimony for this ghost-barber—the one in which a slave boy, not the freedman, had seen a ghostly vision with his own eyes—that Pliny interrupts the narrative flow of his own account, dropping in a subtle *ita narrat*, "so he says," to distance his own authorial voice from that of a lowly slave, and a child (*puer*) at that.⁴⁵

Rhetorically speaking, as Quintilian explains in *The Orator's Education*, it is eminently possible for good and bad men alike to make assertions that are either true or false; good men, although sometimes compelled to lie for good reasons, are nevertheless more likely to be believed than bad men, who can hardly be trusted

even when they are telling the truth.⁴⁶ But sometimes even good men need to appeal to even greater men to make their case. One strategy that often comes in handy, Quintilian suggests, is the appeal to authority:

Authority (*auctoritas*) is a further type of external proof which may be adduced to support a Cause (i.e., a case). Following the Greeks, who call these arguments *kriseis*, our people call them “judgments” or “adjudications”; this does not mean verdicts given in legal proceedings . . . but opinions which can be attributed to nations, peoples, wise men, distinguished citizens, or famous poets. Even common sayings and popular beliefs (*vulgo dicta et recepta persuasione populari*) may be useful. All these are in a sense testimonies, but they are actually all the more effective because they are not given to suit particular Causes, but spoken or given by minds free of prejudice and favor for the simple reason that they seemed either very honorable or very true.⁴⁷

What stands out here is the sheer diversity of sources of authority including even “common” and “popular” forms of proverbial or vernacular wisdom. Especially telling is the way Quintilian classes this startling distribution of opinions together under the heading of “testimony,” yet immediately qualifies this by admitting that they are only testimonies *quodam modo*, “in a sense.”⁴⁸ In other words, Quintilian says, these opinions are analogous to testimony, yet the problematic aptness of this analogy, instead of being a weakness, is rather a source of strength. Indeed, it is probably for this very reason that authority constitutes such an intrinsically heterogeneous category for Quintilian to begin with.

What exactly does the weight of authority confer when it comes to ghost stories? Here again it may be useful to compare Pliny’s ghost letter and its intellectual milieu with some later periods that highlight some important differences between ancient and modern attitudes, as well as some unexamined modern attitudes about the ancient past. For Spinoza, who had read not only Pliny’s letter but also some Suetonius (although skipping the work of Plutarch, which he confesses not to have had on hand) that Boxel had recommended, two chief objections stood out. First, he suggests that “since stories of this kind have no other witnesses than the narrators, the author of such stories can add or suppress circumstantial details as he pleases without having to fear that anyone will contradict him.”⁴⁹ Essentially, Spinoza is arguing that Pliny employs what German literary critics would call a *Beglaubigungsapparat*, a technique that enhances the authority of the narrator and consequently amplifies the credibility of the narrative in general. It is easy enough to see how this might apply to the ghost letter, yet I would nonetheless argue that Pliny’s appeal to the language of certification and corroboration with respect to the ghost-barber story, not to mention his careful distinction between the testimony of his freedman and the slave boy, has less to do with literary devices than rhetorical procedures for

scrutinizing the credibility of key eyewitness testimony. As for Spinoza's second objection, which builds on the first, he admits that "I was not a little amazed, not at the stories that are narrated, but at those who write them. I am surprised that men of ability and judgment should squander their gift of eloquence and misuse it to persuade us of such rubbish."⁵⁰

It is useful to compare Spinoza's disappointment in Pliny's squandering of his own intellect with another, more ambivalent, assertion of Enlightenment superiority. Almost a century after Spinoza and Boxel's ghost debate, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing composed a scathing criticism of Voltaire's dramatic efforts and his use of stage ghosts in particular, deriding them as little more than pale reflections of the ghosts of Shakespeare, a true master. Citing the prevalence of ghosts in the dramatic works of antiquity—a natural outgrowth, he assumes, of a widespread belief in ghosts—Lessing mounted an argument for why ghosts in modern theater needed to be treated differently—why, in other words, one shouldn't go around pretending to deploy them in the same way as an Aeschylus or a Seneca. The reason, he contends, is that whereas almost everyone in antiquity had believed in ghosts (an assumption he never sets out to prove, since ancient credulity merely serves as the foil to his argument), almost no one in the present would be willing to confess to having such a belief. But of course, as Lessing recognized, the matter was not as simple as that:

We no longer believe in ghosts? Who says so? Or rather, what does that mean? Does it mean: we are at last so far advanced in comprehension that we can prove their impossibility; that certain incontestable truths that contradict a belief in ghosts are now so universally known, are so constantly present even to the minds of the most vulgar, that everything that is not in accordance with these truths, seems to them ridiculous and absurd! It cannot mean this. We no longer believe in ghosts can only mean this: in this manner concerning which so much may be argued for or against, that is not decided and never can be decided, the prevailing tendency of the age is to incline towards the preponderance of reasons brought to bear against this belief. Some few hold this opinion from conviction, and many others wish to appear to hold it, and it is these who raise the outcry and set the fashion. Meanwhile the mass is silent, and remains indifferent, and thinks now with one side, now with the other, delights in hearing jokes about ghosts recounted in broad daylight and shivers with horror at night when they are talked of.⁵¹

What makes Lessing's take on contemporary ghost-belief so compelling is the fact that he eschews any facile, whiggish position on the matter of enlightened rationality, opting instead to distribute the question of belief across a broader social surface. Embarrassment and doublespeak everywhere abound. Crucially, "the mass is silent" and it is instead the pretenders to reasoned authority, rather than the au-

thorities themselves, “who raise the outcry and set the fashion.” In doing so, Lessing talks about ghost-belief almost as if it were something that could be plotted in a statistical sense. Like Spinoza, he denies that ghosts can be a known quantity in a metaphysical sense—their existence is and must remain a matter that “is not decided and never can be decided.” On this view—a decidedly modern one, as we shall see—it is rather the sheer preponderance of reasons that determines the state of ghost-belief in any age.⁵²

For Pliny, as I have been suggesting, the question behind the question of what we believe is whom we believe, and why. It is crucial that Pliny himself, a man of considerable social standing, admits at the beginning of his letter not that he believes in ghosts outright, but rather that he is led to believe in their existence (*ego ut esse credam in primis eo ducor*), and closes by begging Sura not to leave him in suspense and uncertainty (*ne me suspensum incertumque dimittas*).⁵³ The fact that he specifically foregrounds the “leisure time” (*otium*) that allows him to engage in such ghostly speculation speaks volumes, as do his concluding remarks that he is surely “not unworthy” (*ne ego quidem indignus*) of Sura’s learned reply.⁵⁴ The rhetorical effect of this understatement turns on the supremely obvious fact that Pliny is *dignus* through and through—that he is, in short, a man of rank. And it is precisely for this reason that his openness to the existence of ghosts, not to mention his inability (feigned or otherwise) to decide the matter for himself, is so remarkable. Spinoza might have been dismayed that Pliny would ever entertain such fanciful ideas, but the fact that he is even bringing such questions out into the open and laying them bare to the scrutiny and criticism of others is significant in and of itself.

A typical example of literary testimony that is often adduced to demonstrate a broad disbelief in ghosts among a majority of Romans, and not only its educated elite, can be found in Juvenal, who wrote that “The existence of ghosts and the Underworld realms and Cocytus and the black frogs in the whirling Styx and the idea that all those thousands cross the water in a single boat—not even boys believe in that, except those not yet old enough to pay admission at the baths.”⁵⁵ Taken within the context of his Satires, however, Juvenal’s statement can hardly be seen as an unmediated observation of broader social attitudes. Indeed, his mention of ghosts—specifically, the *manes* of Rome’s most upstanding statesmen from bygone eras—is conjured up exclusively to shame the effeminate men of his own day, who could never compare to the likes of the Scipios. A similarly infantilizing and degrading point of view is found in Lucian’s *Lover of Lies*, which lampoons the supernatural as much as it does the weighty seriousness that various philosophical schools brought to bear against it. There one of the credulous men, upon hearing one of these fantastic stories, exclaims, “Is it right, Tychiades, to doubt these apparitions any longer, when they are distinctly seen and a matter of daily occurrence?”

"No, by Heaven," I said: "those who doubt and are so disrespectful toward truth deserve to be spanked like children . . . !" ⁵⁶

But if we look outside the range of testimony that speaks explicitly to the matter of ghosts and the ghostly, a different picture begins to emerge. Consider, for example, the following observations of the Elder Pliny on the interrelated issues of geography, knowledge, and ignorance in the *Natural History*:

The province (of Mauretania) contains, as we have said, five Roman colonies, and, to judge by common report, the place might well be thought to be easily accessible; but upon trial this criterion is discovered to be for the most part exceedingly fallacious, because persons of high position, although not inclined to search for the truth, are ashamed of ignorance and consequently are not reluctant to tell falsehoods, as credulity is never more easily let down than when a false statement is attested by an authority of weight (*gravis auctor*). ⁵⁷

Key here is Pliny's observation that claims on good authority can potentially fall apart once they are actually tested. The province of Mauretania (in North Africa) has five Roman colonies; this is a fact that everybody knows, or at any rate "persons of high position," as Pliny says. Yet it is only "by trial," or through experience (*experimento*), that the truth ultimately comes to light and is discovered (*deprehenditur*)—a claim that runs through the *Natural History*, where Pliny from time to time makes clear what he has witnessed for himself and what he has heard secondhand. ⁵⁸ In this way, Pliny comes rather close to Lessing's complaint about those who loudly proclaim to hold certain positions only because they are fashionable, rather than because they are true or are genuinely convinced of it themselves. Inevitably, however, this rough sketch of the sociology of knowledge inevitably raises the question about the object of knowledge itself. In other words: How does one claim not just to believe something, but to really *know* something? What "counts" as knowledge about ghosts?

While Greek philosophers had generally sought to steer clear of rhetoric in order to evade the charge of sophistry, their Roman counterparts, as Lehoux has shown, had few such inhibitions, given how pervasive rhetoric had become in the broader intellectual milieu of imperial times. ⁵⁹ These rhetorical stakes of Pliny's ghost letter become particularly evident if we consider the broader context from which he addresses his concerns to Sura in these closing lines:

So please apply your learned mind to this question; it deserves your long and careful consideration, and I too am surely not undeserving as a recipient of your informed opinion. You may argue both sides of the case as you always do, but lay your emphasis

on one side or the other and do not leave me in suspense and uncertainty; my reason for asking your opinion was to put an end to my doubts.⁶⁰

The last sentence in particular underscores Pliny's desire to resolve the matter decisively as an open-and-shut case. As Yelena Baraz observes, he specifically implores Sura not to employ the Academic argumentative strategy of *disputatio in utramque partem* in which, as Cicero defines it in the *Lucullus*, "disputations do nothing other than by speaking for each side and listening tease out and, so to speak, squeeze out something that is either true or approaches the truth as closely as possible."⁶¹

The investigative principle that governs this mode of Roman rhetoric has its historical roots in skeptical epistemology, although this doesn't necessarily make the technique a skeptical one per se. Its defining feature is rather that the orator be able to make either a pro or con argument on a particular issue with equal persuasiveness. Rather than arriving at a suspension of judgment, a result that would be anathema to the orator's art of persuasion, the orator's aim is rather to make a compelling argument that his opponent will be forced to approve or accept. What this means, as Anita Traninger argues, is that the underlying principle of *disputatio in utramque partem* is based on a "binary form of either/or, that all questions with regard to opinions, doctrines, or received wisdom can be decided either in the positive or in the negative. What does not figure is indecision, or, indeed, compromise."⁶² Within this conceptual framework, the partiality of the orator was neither denied nor regarded as a cardinal sin. What mattered was that he prioritize the task at hand and be ready to advance persuasive arguments and counterarguments. Thus, instead of adhering to something like modern, enlightened forms of objective "disinterestedness" according to which evidence is carefully weighed in as impartial a manner as possible, the ancients rather presumed a paradoxical disposition of "disinterested partiality."

While Pliny's ghost query has been uniformly regarded as genuine and earnest in its appeal to Sura's opinion, I would argue that there is much to suggest a more ambivalent reading. It is true that Pliny claims he is "led to believe" in the existence of ghosts based on key testimony he has at his disposal. And yet, given the copious evidence he has adduced, one wonders what kind of evidence or argument—other than the sheer opinion of Sura—would help him make up his mind. On the surface, at least, Pliny seems to be asking Sura to cut through all of these cunning rhetorical stratagems, come clean, and tell him what he really thinks—that is, to expose his partiality on the matter of ghosts. But the irony, as I see it, is that Pliny is asking Sura to set aside his style of thinking as an orator and abstain from making use of the very same rhetorical tools that Pliny, a consummate orator himself, uses to shore up his own claims. By mounting what seems to be an airtight case, Pliny plainly anticipates that Sura will offer some kind of counterargument that would

put pressure on the evidence and authority he has furnished in propounding his thesis. Recall that for Lessing, the decline of modern ghost-belief means that “in this manner concerning which so much may be argued for or against, that is not decided and never can be decided, the prevailing tendency of the age is to incline towards the preponderance of reasons brought to bear against this belief.” No ancient orator, Pliny included, could abide such a verdict of undecidability or allow himself to be persuaded by the mere “preponderance” of quantified evidence. But in the end, while Pliny does indeed profess a partiality to the existence of ghosts, it nonetheless remains a crucial, yet undecided, question whether his is a partiality divested of its paradoxical quality of disinterestedness as he demands from his friendly adversary.

STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

What do arguments consist of? What forms do they take? As an art historian, I take it as axiomatic that objects themselves can be the source of evidence and arguments that are baked into their physical presence, and that it is this very presence and endurance that in turn allows us, within certain limits, to stake various claims about the people—themselves the subjects of historical inquiry—who made and put them to various ends. Subsequent chapters take up the visual evidence of a range of chiefly funerary objects, including mythological sarcophagi, tomb paintings, and floor mosaics. My choice of specific objects will hopefully become clear in the course of my discussion, but briefly what they share in common is an engagement with issues of pictoriality, the veridicality of perception, and questions of evidence. Thus I’ve tended to extract these objects from their more traditional frameworks of interpretation in classical art and archaeology that position them as the material deposits of belief-patterns. By no means, however, do I intend to “decontextualize” these objects from their funerary frames of reference. Rather, I simply wish to attend to Norman Bryson’s observation that the very *concept* of context can be “undone by its own operation, which is nothing but a movement of regression,” in order to make visible transversal connections that furnish still other frames of reference.⁶³ Simply put, my argument is an argument *about* arguments.

Building on issues of theory and method addressed herein, the argument proceeds over the course of four chapters that are thematically arranged: chapter 1 explores the relationship between the figure of the ghost and the historical ontology and phenomenology of the image as well as the challenge that the ghost poses to the project and challenge of depiction; chapter 2 expands the argument about depiction from figures to space by taking up the Underworld and the problem of virtualizing its ostensibly invisible regions through inferential modes of reasoning; chapter 3

tracks the iconography of drapery in the form of veiled or shrouded ghosts, linking it to the visuality of shame and its relation to the affective economy of sorrow, grief, and mourning; and finally, chapter 4 examines two of the earliest depictions of Doubting Thomas in the history of art around the turn of the fifth century. By taking up the famous incredulity of the apostle who was uncertain whether he was seeing a mere ghost or the actual, resurrected body of Christ in the flesh, I consider how the imagery keys into broader theological and philosophical arguments about sense-perception, materiality, and embodiment. By examining some key issues relating to the late antique transformation of the pagan and Christian worlds, this last chapter accords some greater precision to the historical questions of framing and periodization throughout the book, above all the question of belief.

Chapter One

A GRAMMAR OF GHOSTS

We might say, the color of the ghost is that which I must mix on the palette in order to paint it accurately. But how do we determine what the accurate picture (*Bild*) is?

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Remarks on Color* (2007)¹

The pictures I make are really ghosts of ghosts.

SHERRY LEVINE, *Arts Mag* (1985)²

Upon entering the peristyle garden of the House of the Gilded Cupids in Pompeii, the ancient viewer would have been confronted on the left with an unusual object at eye level: a diamond-shaped obsidian mirror set into the wall that was painted black and polished to establish a continuity of color and a waxy sheen with the reflective surface of the volcanic glass (fig. 1.1).³ Peering into the mirror from an oblique angle, they might have glimpsed the muted image of the garden in the background, its sunlit plantings, fountain, and gleaming marble decorations re-

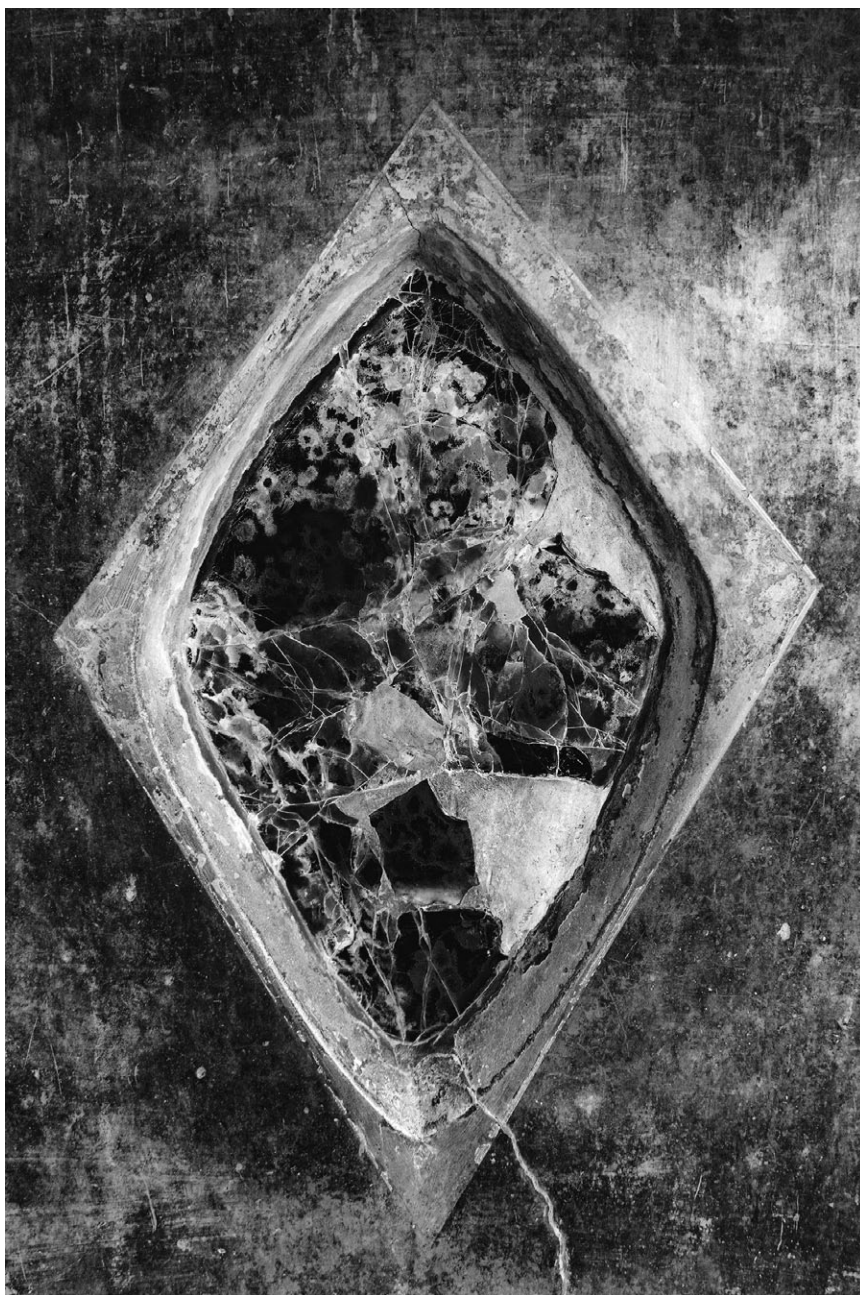


Fig. 1.1 Obsidian mirror, entrance to the peristyle of the House of the Gilded Cupids, Pompeii, 50–79 CE. Photo: Author.

flected in a manner that must have anticipated the later European fascination with the Claude glass, or black mirror, that was used by artists to fashion a view of the tonal values of a landscape that was suggestively pictorial, hence “picturesque.”⁴ When examined head-on, however, they would have seen a strange sight to behold, one evoked in a tantalizingly brief description in the Elder Pliny’s *Natural History*: “this stone is very dark in color and sometimes transparent, but it is dull to the sight, so that when it is used for mirrors attached to walls it reflects shadows rather than images (*pro imagine umbras*).”⁵ Hence the beholder’s face, the very locus of identity in Roman art and thought (a portrait was likewise denoted by the word *imago*), was replaced by a murky shadow (*umbra*) devoid of salient features, a disquieting double.

Then as now, mirrors of all kinds, including more typical examples wrought in bronze or silver, were constituted by their twofold capacity for imitation and deception. Yet, as Pliny’s remarks make clear, obsidian mirrors such as the one in the peristyle produced a more discomfiting phenomenon that went beyond questions of credulity or confidence in the veridicality of perception. Transforming sunlit gardens into moonlit pictures and particular individuals into anonymous shadows, the mirror generates a deathly reversal of expectations and experience. Intriguingly, the reflective properties of the obsidian mirror in the House of the Gilded Cupids are evoked elsewhere in the house in mythological paintings that likewise feature absorptive states of attention and reflection. In Room C, for example, Narcissus gazes at his own reflected image in a pool that indexes not only the limits of mimesis, but also the pernicious quality of its seductive snares. According to Ovid, to whom the tremendous popularity of Narcissus imagery in Pompeii must surely be owed, not even death brings an end to Narcissus’s frustrated desire. Despite having been admonished by the narrator not to chase after “fleeting phantoms (*frustra simulacra*)” and that “what you perceive is the shadow of a reflected image (*quam cernis, imaginis umbra est*),” he remains captivated by the handsome visage that he even comes to recognize as his own so that “Even then, after he was admitted to the Underworld, he gazed at himself in the waters of the Styx (*in Stygia spectabat aqua*),” a “shade gazing at a shade,” as one commentator aptly puts it.⁶

Taking up this black mirror and the suggestive language of Ovid and Pliny as a starting point, this chapter aims to reconstruct an ancient grammar of ghosts—the language games, as Ludwig Wittgenstein might say, by which the ancients identified ghosts with images and pictures, and the ways in which we moderns in turn come to recognize these historical successions. Coincidentally, Wittgenstein himself pointed to the stakes of such a grammar in his critical commentary of Sir James George Frazer’s seminal text in comparative religion and anthropology, *The Golden Bough* (1890):

Frazer: “. . . That these observances are dictated by fear of the ghost of the slain seems certain . . .” But why then does Frazer use the word “ghost”? He thus understands this superstition very well, since he explains it to us with a superstitious word he is familiar with. Or rather, this might have enabled him to see that there is also something in us which speaks in favor of those savages’ behavior. . . . I should like to say: nothing shows our kinship to those savages better than the fact that Frazer has on hand a word as familiar to himself and to us as “ghost” or “shade” in order to describe the views of these people . . . Indeed, this peculiarity relates not only to the expressions “ghost” and “shade,” and much too little is made of the fact that we count the words “soul” and “spirit” as part of our educated vocabulary. Compared with this, the fact that we do not believe that our soul eats and drinks is a trifling matter.⁷

Wittgenstein’s assertion that we share a kinship with so-called “savages”—one predicated not only on particular words or a grammar in the narrowly linguistic sense of rules governing syntax and semantics, but indeed a historical grammar, that is to say historical *forms of life*—seems eminently suggestive for our kinship with the ancients.⁸ This is so by virtue of the simple fact that, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, we have on hand words as familiar to us as “ghost,” “image,” and “picture” to designate, and indeed to recognize, certain ancient concepts and depictions as such.⁹

Amazingly, the ancients themselves pondered these terminological problems and the broader grammar that they evince. On January 10, 45 BCE, Cicero wrote a letter to his friend Cassius, an avowed disciple of Epicurean philosophy, with a particular axe to grind about the matter of atomistic or intromissionist theories of vision. According to this theory, we see such imaginary things as ghosts or centaurs because certain films or membranes slough off from objects—and thus retain their shape and form like a cicada or snake that sheds its skin—and roam through the air until they chance to impinge on the eye and cause vision.¹⁰ Especially noteworthy is Cicero’s consternation about what to call these “films,” a topic that must have caused him particular grief as an accomplished translator in his own right:

I don’t know how it is, but when I write something to you, I seem to see you here in front of me. I am not speaking according to the doctrine of appearances of images (*kat’ eidōlōn phantasias*), to use the terminology of your new friends (*ut dicunt tui amici novi*), who think that even mental appearances (*diadnoētikas phantasias*) are aroused by Catius’ specters (*spectris*). For, in case you have not noticed it, what he of Gargettus and Democritus before him, called “images” (*eidōla*) are termed “specters” (*spectra*) by the late lamented Catius, Insubrian and Epicurean. Now even granting that those specters could strike the eyes, because they run upon the pupils of their own accord, I for one don’t see how they can strike the mind—you will have to teach me when you are safely home again. Are we really to suppose that your specter is in my control, so

that as soon as I take a fancy to think about you, up it comes? And not only you, who are in my heart all the time, but if I start thinking about the island of Britain, will its image (*eidōlon*) fly into my brain?¹¹

Cicero's letter is significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that it marks the very first—and the last, apart from Cassius's reply—attested use of the word "specter" (*spectrum*) in classical antiquity. In many ways, it is a modern word par excellence, one born out of the Enlightenment matrix of Newtonian optics.¹² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe later used it in his anti-Newtonian *Theory of Colors* to describe the subjective experience of retinal afterimages, a phenomenon first attributed to Aristotle in such observations as that "to some young people even when their eyes are wide open, if it is dark, many moving images (*eidōla*) appear, so that they often cover their heads in fright moving before them, so that they often cover up their heads in terror."¹³ Ghosts, according to this view, are nothing more than residual, entoptic images produced by exposure to an external visual stimulus—"physiological colors," as Goethe would felicitously call them.¹⁴

It has been argued from a philological perspective that Catius followed in the footsteps of Greek thinkers who took an existing word with wide currency and then deployed it as a *term* within a coherent philosophical system—in this case, the Greek philosophers Democritus and Epicurus, who took the Homeric *eidōlon* and retained its ghostly overtones while endowing it with a more specific meaning in their atomistic theories of vision. The word *spectrum*, it has been suggested, may have been an older folk word in Latin for "ghost," one whose vernacular quality might very well have appealed to someone like Catius who, like Gaius Amafinius whose work Cicero likewise detested, authored numerous works on Epicurean philosophy with an eye to popularizing them for an audience of *plebs*.¹⁵ We get a glimpse of this in Cassius's reply, where he begins by telling Cicero that "It is as though I was chatting and joking with you in the flesh. That does not, however, come about because of Catius' specters—in return for him I'll throw so many clod-hopping (*rusticos*) Stoics back at you in my next letter that you'll declare Catius Athenian born!"¹⁶ Using the right terms signals a certain *savoir-faire*: one can infer from Cassius's reply that there is something decidedly boorish and even "vulgar" about the very word "specter"—one that only a country bumpkin, a *rusticus*, would use (in contrast to an ostensibly sophisticated and effete, Greek-speaking city-dweller), much less put any stock in.

Cicero had already set the tone for this half-facetious sociology of knowledge. Immediately after his quip about having Britain on the brain, he confesses to Cassius: "But all this later on. I am just testing your reactions." This was not the first time that Cicero took aim at a similarly colorful gripe in his treatise on divination, where he complains that "by your theory, when I think of the walls of Baby-

lon or of the face of Homer, some ‘phantom’ of what I have in mind ‘strikes upon my brain’! Hence it is possible for us to know everything we wish to know, since there is nothing of which we cannot think.”¹⁷ In other words, Cicero takes issue not only with the physical and material constraints of such a theory—that is, how it is that these images can actually penetrate our bodies and cause us to see things that are not really there—but also with how the theory produces a kind of semantic overinvestment in the very concept of these specters or *eidōla*-streams, one that Claude Lévi-Strauss might have called a “floating signifier, which is the disability of all finite thought.”¹⁸

Inevitably, one could draw various lexical distinctions that would serve to highlight our cultural and historical differences from the ancients, and indeed, as Cicero’s ghost letter makes clear, between Greece and Rome. Nevertheless, the most important distinction, as I indicated earlier, has to do with the corresponding fact that the ancients generally identified ghosts with both images *and* pictures (for example, the Latin words *imago*, *effigies*, and *simulacrum* might designate ghosts or reflections or corpuscular effluvia that cause vision on the one hand, but on the other those *very same terms* might just as well denote portraits or statues). Yet they did so, as we shall see, in particular ways according to different grammars of use. Although the words “image” and “picture” are often used synonymously by many art historians, some, such as Whitney Davis, distinguish between them according to their idiomatic or vernacular definitions.¹⁹ Accordingly, Davis analytically works out a historical phenomenology (as distinct from a historical sociology) whose language serves my purposes well throughout this chapter and at various points throughout this book. A crude reduction of his basic premise is that *images* comprise optical registrations of visual phenomena, whereas *pictures* are material artifacts in real space which they extend into its virtual counterpart (a distinction that gives rise to the historically and topologically contingent process whereby embodied beholders “image pictures” at different standpoints in visual space). The fact that some languages such as German do not observe or police such distinctions (as with the word *Bild*, for example, which can easily accommodate both the perceptual and pictorial qualities of the terms in English) only highlights the stakes of these language games and their broader cultural ramifications, rather than relegating them to a narrowly philological or anachronistic problem.

My argument in this chapter thus elaborates on the two theories of the ghost I outlined briefly in the introduction: namely, that ancient depictions of ghosts operate recursively in the sense that they depict the conditions of depiction and even the visual event of seeing itself, and that this recursive play in turn makes visible the systems of classification that shape this relay—one that is inflected with a particular form of historical self-consciousness in the Second Sophistic.²⁰ Yet I wish to stress that if the ancients were interested in testing the “limits of representation,”

as is sometimes said, then they did so neither by means of any vague recourse to “picturing the invisible” nor by engaging the modern problematic of the “unrepresentable” (i.e., the shift from aesthetical to ethical regulative constraints on the discursive representation of such unimaginable events as genocide or torture).²¹ They did so, rather, through the imagistic relays of synopes and ruptures—that is to say, gaps, fissures, or rends in depiction and its imaging that serve to show what depiction *is*—as well as through strategies of redundancy and tautology.²² Indeed, this emphasis on tactics of disruption and circularity is precisely what made it possible to think about how pictures of ghosts might constitute visual forms of self-evidence that bear within themselves the potential to trouble and redefine our established concepts and conventions.

UT PICTURA PHANTASMA

In tracing a history of this grammar, I begin with a selection of Greek and Etruscan material not as mere precedents that model iconographic motifs for the subsequent Roman imagery, but rather to identify and engage a particular strain of thinking and writing about these problems in classical art and archaeology. Why is it that these questions about the relationship between ghosts and depiction have been taken up in Greek art, but are virtually untouched in the Roman context? The answer, I suspect, has to do with the fact that the scholarly conversation about the Greek material comprises a more or less coherent corpus of objects that have been adduced as evidence in support of various claims about such ghostly phenomena: most famously, perhaps, the white-ground lekythoi produced in the city of Athens within a relatively tight chronological period of approximately fifty years. Of course, comparanda can be drawn from places and times that precede and follow this period, mainly in the medium of vase-painting, but again it is the relative coherence of this “data set” that allows scholars to produce facts about the iconography of ghosts that correspond to a given type or series—one that for all its differences, as we shall see, was relatively stable.

Needless to say, there are exceptions, and I am doubtless simplifying the case of the lekythoi. But my overarching point is that the Romans by contrast had no such corpus or “data set” from which a more or less consistent iconography of ghosts can be derived or posited. According to Erwin Panofsky’s classic schema, a beholder progresses from a “pre-iconographic” recognition of expressive forms (exemplified by “certain configurations of line or color, or certain peculiarly shaped lumps of bronze or stone”) to the recognition of pictorial motifs (i.e., iconography), which ultimately gives way to the recognition of symbolic forms at the level of “cultural meaning” (i.e., iconology).²³ Yet in practice these recognitions (pre-iconographic,

iconographic, iconological) are hardly as stable and “indivisible” as Panofsky suggests. At any given moment in what Davis calls the “iconographic succession,” one might see or recognize depictive visibility (i.e., pictoriality) *as such*, or not, and in addition to this possibility of nonrecognition might also succeed from one recognition to the next and then recur to a prior one in a kind of feedback loop.²⁴ To put it another way, a (standardly Panofskyan) positive iconography that tracks that emergence of shapes, motifs, and symbols must be complemented by a “negative hermeneutics” that can account for whatever disruptions and discontinuities—these moments of ambiguity being nothing else than a flash of pictoriality, of recognizing that one is in the presence of a picture—that may crop up along the way at any point in the iconographic succession. In the case of Greek vase-painting, classical archaeology tends to operate under an important assumption of positive iconography: namely, that the relative constancy of pictorial motifs facilitates their identification with symbolic specifications in accordance with certain ancient concepts at hand—concepts that, in the neo-Kantian tradition of Panofsky’s iconographical analysis, allow us to make sense of the series as such.

The Kantian premise of this kind of iconographical analysis—the bread and butter of the art-historical enterprise and its methodology—is vital for understanding the way in which scholars have implicitly, but uniformly, theorized the relationship between language and experience, and how these categories in turn play a crucial role in the formation of concepts. As it happens, Kant himself provided us with a road map for thinking about the case of ghosts—one that, for all its apparent marginality, lies at the very heart of questions about knowledge and representation. In his anonymously published, pre-critical treatise *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Elucidated by the Dreams of Metaphysics* (1766), Kant endeavored to see whether it was possible for metaphysics, which he called “the science of the limits of human reason,” to prove the existence of ghostly phenomena (coincidentally, this was the same year that witnessed the publication of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laocoön* that would similarly explore the question of “limits” [*Grenzen*] in his programmatic account of medium specificity).²⁵ Kant begins the text by stating that, far from being unworthy of serious study, such phenomena bear the possibility of cashing out in terms of real, epistemological value: “If everything about spirits repeated by school-boys, recounted by the common people, and demonstrated by philosophers were gathered together, it would seem to make up no small part of our knowledge.”²⁶

For Kant, such an undertaking entailed or required much more than a simple answer of “yes” or “no” to the question of whether ghosts exist. Rather, as I argued with respect to Pliny’s ghost letter in the introduction, the stakes of the matter had to do with a much broader set of epistemological concerns about the criteria by which we think we can identify and indeed *define* a spirit as such in the first place. Much to his chagrin, descriptions of spirits had recently begun to feature promi-

nently even in philosophical texts in a rather uncritical fashion. Kant was therefore keen to show why the first step toward any possible understanding of spirits has to be an honest admission of what one doesn't know. The problem with philosophers who create "unstable word meanings" instead of admitting what they don't know, Kant warns, is that they begin to explain the qualities of spirits (e.g., that they are endowed with reason) before they establish a working concept of what a spirit even *is*. Thus, Kant confesses:

I know not, therefore, whether there are spirits; indeed, what is more, I do not even know what the word *spirit* means. Yet since I have often used the word myself or heard others use it, something must be understood by it, whether this something be a figment of the imagination or something real. In order to disentangle this hidden meaning, I shall compare my ill-understood concept with all cases of its application; and through observing those with which it is compatible and with which it is inconsistent, I hope to unfold its hidden sense.²⁷

It would be relatively easy, Kant suggests, to know whether or not there are such things as spirits if they were derived from empirical concepts. "But now," he says, "spirits are spoken of even when one doubts whether they even exist. Thus the concept of a spiritual nature cannot be treated as abstracted from experience."²⁸

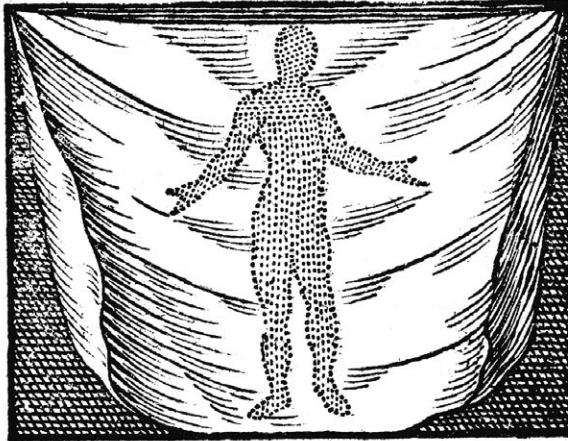
How can we claim to have experience of something quasi-invisible or intangible from which we can abstract a corresponding concept? To make his case, Kant turns to the analogous case of the soul and asserts that it is through the faculty of common sense and the felt experience of the body that we can claim to know something about the soul's affections. Drawing from his own pedagogical experience in language instruction, Kant points to a famous page from the first widely used illustrated children's textbook, John Amos Comenius's *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures) (1658), depicting "the soul of man" (*Anima hominis*/ *Die Seele des Menschen*) (fig. 1.2).²⁹ Pictured as a shadow of a man cast upon an unfurled cloth in a manner resembling the miraculous visage of Christ on Veronica's napkin, the depiction is juxtaposed with a corresponding set of verbal definitions that both qualify and complement it. It seems deeply significant that Kant should turn to such an example that adumbrates his later thinking about the relation of the image to the transcendental schema and more generally to his aphoristic assertion that "concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind." For even as he presents it as a more or less throwaway example, the picture does important work in terms of the way it captures both the form of his argument and his broader claims about the sociology of knowledge.

How does this preamble on Kantian aesthetics pertain to ancient visualities? A case in point is Jean-Pierre Vernant's famous thesis that the Greeks of the Ar-

XLII.

Anima Ho-
minis.

Die Seele des
Menschen.



Anima
est vita corporis,
in toto una :
Tantum *Vegetativa*,
in *Plantis* ;
Simul *Sensitiva*,
in *Animalibus* ;
Etiam *Rationalis*,
in *Homine*.
Hæc, consistit
in tribus: (Et) [Intel-
In *Mente* [Intelle-

Die Seele /
ist des Leibes Leben /
einig in dem ganzen :
Allein eine Wachstüm-
in den pflanzen ; (liche /
Zugleich eine Sinnliche /
in den Thieren ;
Auch eine Vernünstige /
in dem Menschen.
Diese / bestehet
in dreyen Dingen: (nunst)
Im Verstand [Ver-
quâ

Fig. 1.2 John Amos Commenius, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures), 1658.

chaic period never had something as seemingly basic as a “notion of figural representation” in the first place.³⁰ While maintaining that they did have a sense of “figuration” in the most general terms, Vernant insisted that the concept of figural representation (in the sense that we know it today after Plato’s image theory, which Vernant recognizes not as an incremental change in the historical ontology of images, but as a true rupture or paradigm shift) did not emerge until the fifth century when the word *mimesis* entered the Greek vocabulary. As Stephen Halliwell has shown, the nearly standard translation of *mimesis* simply as “imitation” risks occluding the broader sweep of its cognitive, ethical, and psychological force in its ancient configurations, evoking in its stead a whole set of modern, pejorative associations with copying and romantic issues of originality.³¹ Without this word—and by extension this concept—the Greeks had no concept of images “properly speaking,” as Vernant was fond of saying.³² Up until this point, he asserts, the Greeks recognized only “doubles” of things or persons that betokened an absent presence in a substitutive fashion.

Among Vernant’s favored examples of what he called the “psychological category of the double” is a stele set up over the grave that stood in place of the deceased as well as the ghostly *eidōlon* or *psuchē* evoking the insubstantial and evanescent semblance or presence of the dead. In Homeric times, it has been argued, the words *eidōlon* and *psuchē* were practically interchangeable lexical items, even though the former referred to visual (if unreal or ontologically suspect) phenomena such as ghosts, images, and reflections, while the latter referred to normally invisible things like soul or breath. This conceptual and practical equivalence has been inferred from examples like that of Homer’s well-known description of the ghost of Patroclus (*Iliad* 23.64ff). While Homer calls Patroclus a *psuchē* when he appears as an oneiric image to Achilles in a dream, the latter awakes and then exclaims that even in death there is a *psuchē* and an *eidōlon*.

The strict nominalism undergirding Vernant’s thesis thus led him to infer a historical rupture between two kinds of images: the Homeric *eidōlon*, whose etymology (*-weid*, perhaps corresponding to the Latin *video*) points to aspects of seeing and the realm of the visible; and the Platonic *eikōn*, whose etymology points beyond the merely visible to designate aspects of likeness, likelihood, and the realm of resemblance or similarity.³³ By purporting to capture the inner essence of its subject, rather than its superficial appearance, the *eikōn* effectively downgraded the status of the *eidōlon* to an empty likeness or faux-semblant. Moreover, Plato drew a starker and stridently hierarchical distinction between the *eidōlon* and the *psuchē* so that there was no longer any possibility to confuse them or treat them as practically coextensive. While they might have comprised two sides of the same coin in Archaic thought, now the *psuchē* constituted an individual’s immortal essence, with the *eidōlon* referring only to a kind of corporeal husk. Thus, according to a well-

known passage in the *Phaedo*, the visibility of ghosts was a direct reflection of the impurity of a soul weighed down by its affinity for the empty, fleeting pleasures of the visible (material) world. Constrained by this affinity, “shadowy ghosts of souls” (*psuchōn skioeidē phantasmata*) could be seen flitting around tombs, unwittingly serving out their punishment for their formerly wicked ways. Consequently, Vernant remarked, “We have thus passed from the soul, ghostly double of the body, to the body as a ghostly reflection of the soul.”³⁴

Intriguingly, Vernant turns to a much later story from Pausanias in support of his thesis that the ghostly “double” of the dead could somehow be chastened or tamed through mimetic chains of resemblance:

About Actaeon the Orchomenians had the following story. A ghost (*eidōlon*), they say, was running about and ravaging the land. When they inquired at Delphi, the god bade them discover the remains of Actaeon and bury them in the earth. He also bade them make a bronze likeness of the ghost (*tou eidōlou chalkēn poiēsamenous eikona*) and fasten it to a rock with iron. I have myself seen this image (*agalma*) thus fastened.³⁵

Putting a ghost to rest by replicating and fixing it in the form of an image was just one kind of magical technology advocated by the Greeks, specifically the *psuchagōgoi*, the ancient equivalents of our modern-day psychical researchers and ghost hunters.³⁶ The significance of this practice has been extensively discussed from an anthropological perspective. Less attention, however, has been paid to the role of resemblance in this episode. Pausanias does not mince words when describing the image fashioned by the Orchomenians: it was a likeness not of Actaeon, he says, but of his *ghost*, his *eidōlon*. By deliberately designating the image as an *eikōn* of an *eidōlon*, Pausanias specifies an image whose efficacy is both magically and mimetically constituted. This change in focus no longer opposes substitution and similitude as mutually exclusive ways to make images, by recognizing instead how the two might be mutually implicated. It invites us, moreover, to consider the theoretical legacy of a pre-Platonic ghostly image in a post-Platonic world, as well as the more pertinent question of what such an image actually *looks* like.

While examples of these ghostly “doubles” can be found in earlier vase-painting from the 460s and onward, some of the most evocative examples are drawn from the corpus of white-ground lekythoi, a type of oil flask produced in Athens during the fifth century that was used for libations in funerary contexts.³⁷ Significantly, the historical emergence of the lekythoi occurs in tandem with the conspicuous absence of monumental stone sepulchral monuments that scholars have attributed to sumptuary legislation. The lekythoi have thus been treated as both deposits and constitutive elements of political events in Athenian democracy. What makes

these objects particularly useful for thinking about Vernant's argument is the fact that many of them were produced decades *before* Plato's image theory, and that this theory may in fact have been constructed partly on the basis of such material artifacts.³⁸ On many of these vessels, the deceased, conventionally identified as an *eidōlon*, sits on the base of a stele or tomb monument or stands alongside it, in most respects resembling the visitors who come bearing grave offerings. Compared with this formal similarity between the living and the dead—a phenomenon that continues well into the Roman period, as we shall see—small winged figures are often painted in the environs of the tomb, issuing in a point of intentional visual interest into the depicted scene. Like barely fleshed-out silhouettes, these figures have proved more difficult to identify and interpret. For some scholars, they are *psuchai*; for others, they merely depict the *eidōlon* in a different aspect.³⁹ On many examples, these winged figures, despite their sketchy, minimal marks, imitate or model the mourning gestures performed by the bereaved at the tomb. Although a famous piece in New York shows one such winged figure hovering directly above the head of the deceased (plate 1.1), a detail that invites the identification of the two, other vases like that of the Sabouroff Painter show the deceased amid a multitude of such creatures, making such a close identification difficult, if not impossible, to establish with any degree of certainty.⁴⁰

Once again, the problem of nominalism haunts the interpretation of the iconography and any claim the latter makes to complement the philological account of ancient Greek concepts of the image. For Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, the (still) prevailing scholarly tendency to draw a sharp distinction between the depiction of the life-size figure of the deceased and that of the winged figures, calling the former *eidōla* and the latter *psuchai*, founders on the restrictiveness of a philological and semantic myopia: "Like the words '*psuchē*' and '*eidōlon*' (which refer to the same thing by 'naming' different aspects of it), but not in correspondence with them, the small winged soul schema and the life-size schema are iconographical possibilities, particular articulations, selected to suit particular articulations, of the same semantic field 'shade, soul of the dead.'"⁴¹ Sourvinou-Inwood's insistence on the contingency of these terms and their essentially metonymic function is well taken, but what are we to make of the claim (which still enjoys broad purchase) that the iconography does not operate "in correspondence with them"?

It would be one thing to say that the iconography of the vase is not simply an illustration of the words and the literary descriptions that give a context for their use (whether in Homer or in Plato). But this is not her claim. Rather, her claim is that the iconography evinces "schemata" not in the ancient Greek sense of that term, but instead through an implicitly Kantian lens intimated elsewhere in her assertion, for example, that "the starting point of perception is the established conceptual schemata which organize the sense-data."⁴² Interestingly, however, this

premise is derived not directly via Kant's transcendental schema (and the philosopher's corresponding assertion that the imagination is necessary for perception), but rather from the "schema" or "minimum image" as defined and developed by the art historian Ernst Gombrich, whose famous maxim that "making comes before matching" can for all intents and purposes be read as a pithier version of Vernant's nearly contemporary thesis. Thus, Sourvinou-Inwood concludes, the "recognition of resemblance between an iconic sign representing a certain object and the object which it represents is frequently based on our knowledge of certain cultural conventions of interpretation."⁴³

This last point begs certain questions, however, since if the iconography ostensibly does not operate "in correspondence with" the words that delimit the semantic field to which they are related, where else *but* the iconography are we to turn for "knowledge of certain cultural conventions of interpretation"? Drawing on Michel Foucault's historical nominalism, Richard Neer has reexamined Vernant's account of the historical ontology of images in Archaic and Classical thought.⁴⁴ As Neer observes, we have ample evidence that the Archaic Greeks experienced sculpted blocks of marble as statues, which is to say that they saw and treated them as statues, and that these experiences (as well as our ability to recognize them *as* experiences) constitute a phenomenological encounter, rather than an act of cognitive interpretation. Accordingly, he argues, such experiences should themselves constitute the criterion of the concepts and the forms of life that govern their grammar of use: "It gains us nothing to say that the Greeks treated certain objects as figural representations, experienced those objects as figural representations, talked about them as figural representations, yet did not possess the concept of a figural representation. For in that case, the concept of a figural representation would be, literally, useless . . ."⁴⁵ We might then turn back to the visual evidence of the *lekythoi* in order to try to derive certain concepts of ghosts, images, and pictures in the manner that Neer describes.

My basic claim is that these winged figures correspond to the category of what W. J. T. Mitchell calls "metapictures," or "pictures that refer to themselves or to other pictures, pictures that are used to show what a picture is."⁴⁶ While there is doubtless much to say about the relations between these winged figures and the deceased, the first step toward any such interpretation, I suggest, lies in the recognition of these depicted figures *as* depictions at a fundamental, degree-zero level—to account for how they "succeed to pictoriality" or, more particularly, how they succeed to metapictoriality. As a group, the *lekythoi* provide an excellent case for thinking through issues of pictorial self-reference, as many of them feature depictions of *lekythoi* (in scenes of ritual libations at the grave where the actual vessels would have been used and deposited) as part of their iconographic repertory. But the case of the winged figures takes this conceit even further, pointing to other

kinds of depictions in the corpus of lekythoi as a whole and in rare instances in one and the same vessel. In this sense, the iconography evinces two related ideas: first, that depiction is somehow tantamount to naming, and second, Mitchell's claim that metapictures do not derive their self-referentiality from language, but instead "provide their own metalanguage."⁴⁷

An example of the former can be seen on a vase in Boston (ca. 450–440 BCE) showing the tomb of an athlete flanked by two viewers (fig. 1.3).⁴⁸ Of key interest here is the way in which the painter has distinguished pictorially between two kinds of sculpted figures: two statues in the round representing youthful athletes, depicted here as acroteria standing atop the corner volutes; and a group of relief sculptures situated within the shallow space of the tomb's pediment depicted as silhouetted figures—figures that, although wingless, bear a strong resemblance to the *eidōla* at the tomb—engaged in a boxing match.⁴⁹ Crucially, the vase depicts these silhouetted figures as a source of intentional visual interest by depicting the conditions of their beholding: an older man wearing a mantle kneels on the base of the monument, leans on his staff, and gazes intently at these figures which, in a manner that chimes with broader trends in contemporary architectural sculpture, feature more open and dynamic poses than the sculpted figures in the round.⁵⁰ In this way, the vessel's imagery showcases another feature of the metapicture, namely the way it depicts its own scene of interpretation.⁵¹

A lekythos attributed to the Revelstoke Group (ca. 420 BCE), now in Osaka, takes the conceit full circle by depicting the winged figures at the tomb in a synoptic relation with the second-order depictions *of* depictions in a similar manner as the Boston vessel (fig. 1.4).⁵² In this case, it is not the stele that features such imagery, but rather two depicted lekythoi offered as grave goods by the mourners at the tomb. The depicted iconography of those lekythoi shows silhouetted figures whose gestures suggest that they themselves represent mourners. To the right of the stele, a winged figure approaches a woman proffering another dedicatory vessel. As with the "shadow-boxers" on the Boston vase and their figural relation to the acroteria sculptures in the round on the volutes, it is clear that the painter has in this case attempted to put the winged figure and the depictive content of the lekythoi into a conceptual relation with one another in order to register recursively their recognition *as* depictions, as images of figures that are there, if not in flesh and blood. It is as if the wings of these ghostly figures liberate them from the constraining elements that define and delimit what counts as a picture in the case of the depicted boxers and mourners, contained by the frame of the pediment and the limits of the pictorial field on the depicted lekythoi.

On the Osaka vase, and by extension the series of white-ground lekythoi to which it belongs, the hazy distinction between the real and the fictive is achieved through such silhouetted figures that are nested within the pictorial field in such a



Fig. 1.3 White-ground lekythos depicting a grave-monument for an athlete, Thanatos Painter, 450–440 BCE. Athens. Ceramic. Photo: © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 01.8080, Henry Lillie Pierce Fund.

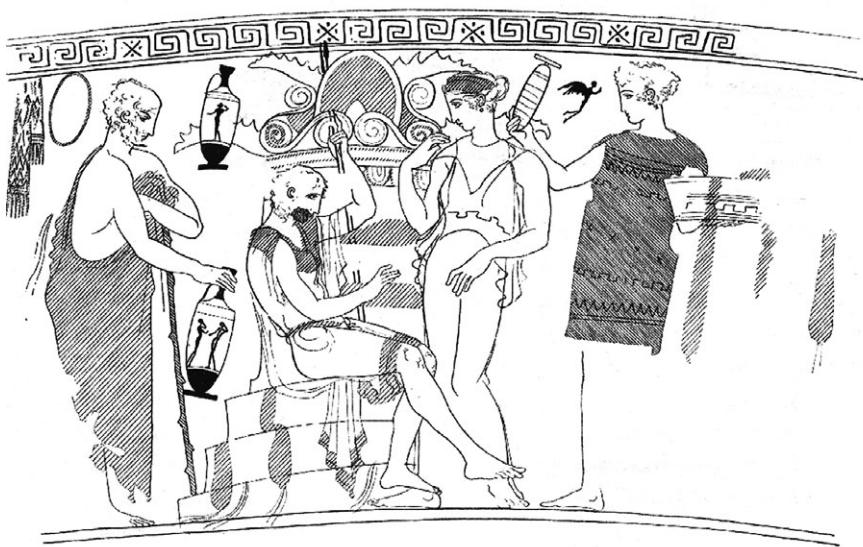


Fig. 1.4 White-ground lekythos with scene at grave-monument, attributed to the Revelstoke Group, ca. 420 BCE. Ceramic. Athens. Photo: after Sotheby's (London), 27–28 May 1929, p. 25. Osaka, Japan, Oka Collection.

way that creates a *mise-en-abyme* or an implied infinite regress in its visual structure as a metapicture. In this way, the painter opens up what Michael Podro calls “the imaginative project of depiction” in the sense that it “retrieves for itself the very distinction between pictorial and nonpictorial seeing.”⁵³ To look at depiction in this way, Podro argues, is to free it from the constraints of semiotic and nominalist accounts that separate the activities of seeing and the imagination, thus allowing the beholder to toggle back and forth between these modes of experience and in so doing to see or recognize “an internal architecture of correspondences.”⁵⁴

Some intriguing points of comparison with the evidence of the lekythoi may be drawn from Etruria, where the selective adaptation of themes and motifs from Greek myth, especially those pertaining to the Underworld, was especially pervasive in the funerary sphere. A well-known wall painting from the Tomb of Orcus II, dating to the last quarter of the fourth century, is especially apposite (plate 1.2).⁵⁵ Of particular interest for present purposes is the veiled figure on the right, labeled as *hinthial Tēriasals*, or “the ghost of Tiresias,” the lame seer in the *Nekyia* who foretold what perils awaited Odysseus at home in Ithaca. It is important to emphasize here that the scholarly understanding of Etruscan, a still-enigmatic, non-Indo-European language, is derived chiefly from inscriptions on various religious and funerary objects. Thus, while dictionaries of the Etruscan language state that *hinthial* constitutes the Etruscan equivalent of the Greek *eidōlon*, it is essential to

bear in mind that this philological observation is grounded in a phenomenological encounter of depiction.⁵⁶ What we have, then, is both a figurative and a literal grammar in which Tiresias is explicitly acknowledged to be a ghost in the depicted scene.⁵⁷ Like the visual and verbal dialectic that underlies the modern artist René Magritte's paintings of pipes, it simultaneously embeds the external authority of language within a resolutely pictorial frame of reference.⁵⁸ Yet whereas it is the indexical "Ceci" in the sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" that generates both the pictorial self-reference and the interpretive riddle of Magritte's pictures, the grammatical form *hinthial Terasals* achieves something rather different.

Unlike other labels that identify figures with names in the nominative, *Terasals* is given in the genitive case—generally formed in an agglutinative fashion by adding an "s" at the end of the name (other examples include the *hinthial Patrucl* in the François Tomb or the *hinthia Aturmucas* on a painted Etruscan krater)—thus signaling that it is not simply Tiresias who is shown, but his ghost or shade in a distinctly possessive sense.⁵⁹ The recursive potential of this game can be seen in a mid-fourth-century bronze hand mirror from Vulci that shows Odysseus (*Uthuze*) confronting Hermes of Hades/Hermes Psychopompos (*Turms Aitas*, in which case the genitive is descriptive, rather than possessive) and the ghost of Tiresias (*hinthial Terasias*) during the Nekyia (fig. 1.5).⁶⁰ Here, rather like the obsidian mirror of which Pliny speaks, the viewer of this mirror would have been invited to consider her own reflection in the mirror in juxtaposition with the *hinthial* of Tiresias, keeping in mind that the same word held a polysemic charge with the domain of reflections and images *tout court*—a resonance that would have been especially appropriate, given that the archaeological findspots of Etruscan mirrors have without exception been funerary in nature.

Somewhat surprisingly, the lexical distinction accorded to the ghost of Tiresias in the Tomb of Orcus II does not seem to have been granted to the other illustrious figure standing to his left. While the identification of this figure can be deduced from the fragmentary inscription "memru[n]" that doubtless spelled out Achmemrun, or Agamemnon, the fact that there doesn't seem to be any available space after this last consonant suggests that the name was given in the nominative case, rather than the genitive, and that there was thus a qualification of Agamemnon as a *hinthial* in the original inscription. Nonetheless, the identification of this figure as a ghost can be discerned not only through the external means of the poetic context, but through external pictorial means as well. The bandages slung over Agamemnon's shoulder and around his chest conform to an iconographic motif employed elsewhere in Etruscan art to distinguish ghosts that had suffered grisly deaths from gory wounds that were sometimes depicted as though they were still fresh.⁶¹ The distinction between the ghosts of Tiresias and Agamemnon is thus achieved dia-critically through different modes of verbal and visual articulation.



Fig. 1.5 Etruscan bronze mirror with Uthuze, Turms Aitaś, and Hinthal Teraśiaś, fourth century BCE. Vatican Museums. Photo: after *Etruskische Spiegel* 2.240.

Situated between the ghosts of Tiresias and Agamemnon is a reedy stalk populated by diminutive, silhouetted figures whose acrobatic lunges convey a sense of wispy insubstantiality. Nameless and differentiated only by gender (at least one of the figures has demonstrable male genitalia), their appearance has sometimes been attributed to the so-called “lesser Nekyia” in the *Odyssey* when Homer compares the flitting and squeaking souls of the slain suitors in Ithaca to bats on their way to the Underworld.⁶² Formally, these silhouetted figures bear a close resemblance to the winged figures on the *lekythoi* and especially the silhouetted figures

depicted *as* depicted figures (in the medium of relief sculpture or vase-painting) that those winged figures resemble. The question is how, and indeed whether, they hang together in the iconographic succession. For Panofsky, the phenomenon of “iconographic disjunction” names the adoption or appropriation of a motif from one culture by another (in contrast to the phenomenon of pseudomorphosis, which names the morphological resemblance between two forms that have no genetic relationship).⁶³ In so doing, the motif accrues, or is adapted to, a new meaning. Thus, the constancy of two motifs on an iconographic level (i.e., the fact that they look alike) is offset by the symbolic specifications they acquire in their new contexts. A positive iconography as defined above would strive to empirically account for the iconographic disjunction that intervenes between the iconographic and iconological stages of the succession by identifying those symbolic re-specifications. Doing so could explain how two indiscriminable motifs might have different meanings, or perhaps meanings that survive in a transcultural context that are nevertheless marked by various effects of untimely difference.

Although they do not resemble the figures from a strictly formal perspective, I want to suggest a symbolic connection between the figures and the vaporous black clouds that fill the Underworld scenery in the adjoining panels as well as in the earlier phase of the tomb’s construction (Tomb of Orcus I, dating to the late fourth century BCE) (fig. 1.6). The depiction of these clouds and their jet-black opacity is unique to Etruscan art, but seems tantalizingly suggestive of *achlus*, the black mist which Homer describes as invisible to mortal men, but visible to those on the brink of death.⁶⁴ Although the figures and the clouds have different shapes or formal configurations—bearing in mind, of course, that the frequent literary comparison of ghostly figures to wisps of smoke and shape-shifting clouds suggests that these formal differences might be semiotically labile and unfixed—what they have in common is an atypically all-black, unmodulated flatness within their bounded forms. Indeed, we might even go so far as to say that the silhouetted figures and the black clouds are formed of the same “invisible,” shadowy stuff, that they are figuratively *consubstantial*. In their shared symbolic connection to aspects of death and dying, the silhouetted figures and the infernal clouds resemble one another in the way they depict the conditions of visibility through a material relay of recognitions.

Here we might think of Lessing’s complaint in the *Laocöon* that attempts by (modern) artists to depict such a cloud exceeded the limits of painting because the cloud was a poetic device used to render something invisible; to paint it with such literalness was to generate an unwelcome visual circularity: “Thus it is not only that in painting the cloud is an arbitrary and not a natural sign; but this arbitrary sign does not even possess the definite distinctiveness which it could have as such, for it is used both to render the visible invisible and the invisible visible.”⁶⁵ Lessing may not have been able to abide the semiotic ambiguity of clouds in his aesthetic theory



Fig. 1.6 Portrait of Velia Velcha, Tomb of Orcus I. 375–350 BCE. Tarquinia.
Photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY.

of painting and poetry and their spatio-temporal divisions, yet it is precisely this kind of ontological and phenomenological indeterminacy that Seneca would later take up in his *Natural Questions* when he sought to answer why it sometimes appears that clouds are colored from certain standpoints: “Actually, a cloud itself is not visible from all sides; for no one who is inside a cloud can see it. Why is it surprising, then, if the cloud’s color is not visible? And yet, although the cloud is not visible it is there.”⁶⁶ Seneca’s explication of clouds and their bivisibility from different standpoints thus constitutes a naturalistic inversion of the Homeric *achlus* or mist that falls over the eyes of the dying. Through its novel handling of light and shadow—one that Otto Brendel tellingly compared to the chiaroscuro in Leonardo da Vinci’s portrait of Ginevra de’Benci—the Tomb of Orcus stages an elaborate reversal of visibility as well as the normal relations of figure and ground between the real space of the tomb and the virtual space of its depicted Underworld.⁶⁷

One final object will, I hope, tie the diverse threads of this section together while at the same time refocusing some of the broader iconographic questions I’ve developed thus far. Although otherwise unparalleled in Roman art, the depiction of ghosts or souls as diminutive, silhouetted figures had a curious and singular rerudescence some four hundred years after the Tomb of Orcus in a small number of painted linen textiles from the Roman-period city of Saqqara in Egypt. The archaeological contexts of these textiles, most of which were acquired in the nineteenth century, remain unclear: some of them show evidence of staining, indicating that they were used as burial shrouds for the deceased in the process of mummification; others show no such staining and may have been used as some kind of hanging in the tomb. In any case, the funerary function of these textiles is supported by the iconography, which consistently features the deceased flanked by Osiris on the left and Anubis on the right, the Egyptian gods governing the realm of death, burial, and the afterlife.

A superb example in the Pushkin Museum, dated to the mid-second century CE, has been studied extensively with respect to broader questions of style and its heuristic value for discerning workshop practices (plate 1.3).⁶⁸ Here, as with the other textiles, the deceased is shown between Osiris and Anubis. He is depicted in a classical style that stands in stark contrast to the Egyptian (or, more precisely, Egyptianizing) style that governs the rest of the picture: the detailed physiognomy and hairstyle, along with the three-quarter turn of the head, balances the dynamic contrapposto of the body, clothed in a himation depicted with sumptuously illusionistic folds that convincingly suggest the contours of a body underneath. The naturalism of this central figure is juxtaposed on either side by the frontality of Osiris (sometimes identified as the deceased in his mummified aspect) and the profile of Anubis, who in his capacity as a psychopomp holds the key to the Underworld and prepares the deceased for his journey to the afterlife. Behind this central trio

of figures stands an imposing edifice of a pylon marked with the name of Sarapis, the Greco-Egyptian deity connected to the aspects of the Underworld, in a hieroglyphic inscription. Further below, in an indeterminate space or middle ground, a series of registers depict the canopic jars containing the viscera of the deceased.

Upon closer and prolonged examination, however, the visual dominance of the deceased and the gods, as well as the pictorial organization of the scene more generally, is destabilized by a teeming multitude of shadowy, miniature, and minimally elaborated figures (plate 1.4). Strangely, given the uniqueness of their depiction in Egyptian art of the Pharaonic period and in the subsequent Ptolemaic and Roman eras, these figures have largely been passed over in silence in the substantial scholarship on this shroud and others of its kind. The scant literature that mentions them at all has plausibly identified them as “damned souls” in a kind of syncretic Egyptian and Greco-Roman eschatology—an interpretation based in the *Tale of Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire*, a work of Egyptian literature attested in the Roman era in which the protagonist visits the realm of the dead and witnesses the eternal toils of sinners that strongly echo the punishments of Oknus and Tantalus from the Greek mythology of Hades.⁶⁹ Yet this narrower focus on the eschatological aspects of the shroud and its iconography has tended to overlook more general questions about the depictive aspects of the shadowy figures and how they are operating pictorially.

In the case of the Tomb of Orcus, I said that a positive iconography would strive to identify how motifs that look the same come to acquire different meanings in the iconographic disjunction. The Saqqara shroud invites us to consider its negative counterpart that would instead strive to inferentially account for what Davis calls a “recognitional disjunction” that intervenes between the pre-iconographic and iconographic stages of the succession so as to reveal the indiscriminability not of the motif as such, but of the (pre-iconographic) *shapes* that are taken to be the same (iconographic) motif in two pictures.⁷⁰ In other words, it concerns not whether two indiscriminable motifs have divergent meanings, but whether in fact the two motifs depict the same thing. This is certainly a live question in the Tomb of Orcus, but in the case of the Saqqara shroud, which interweaves a complex dynamic among Egyptian, Greek, and Roman cultures that is often characterized somewhat tendentiously as “hybrid,” the stakes seem particularly fraught.

To a degree, the figures bear a certain resemblance to earlier Egyptian depictions of the shadow of the dead (*Shout*) whose ontology was accorded a special status with respect to the relations of the body and soul as described in the Book of the Dead (plate 1.5).⁷¹ But the resemblance is qualified, since at a minimum those portrayed shadows self-evidently conform more or less to normal human proportions. Tellingly, the one scholar who has written about these shadowy figures more extensively has compared them to figures that look nearly identical, but are actually hieroglyphics, not portrayals. Davis has used this precise example (i.e.,

hieroglyphics and portrayals, not the Saqqara shroud) to show how “two different notational systems” (written script and depiction) might thus produce not only different symbolic meanings, but seemingly identical motifs that in fact depict two very different things. In this case, the issue of scale is essential, since hieroglyphs may be at any scale, whereas portrayals might employ scale to connote distinctions of social status, for example.

On the Pushkin shroud, the arms and legs of these figures evidently adhere to no normal system of proportions or scalability, extending in a patently exaggerated fashion to perform the tasks at hand in which they are busily engaged. If indeed they are shadows or shades, they resemble the shadow *not* according to the legendary invention of painting as the tracing of a silhouette (a pictorial invention which Pliny states that the Egyptians themselves had laid claim), but instead as the extravagant distortions of a cast shadow from the oblique angle of a late-afternoon sun.⁷² These projected distortions produce a source of intentional visual interest, one that is amplified by virtue of the fact that they are hidden in plain sight.⁷³ A cluster of them appear at the bottom of the picture where they contort themselves into impossibly distended forms while arranging the folds of fabric of the deceased’s himation and anointing his exposed legs and feet. Indeed, the deceased is not the only recipient of their care and attention: Osiris and Anubis likewise get their due, while other figures seem to be focused on the canopic jars, construction projects, and so on. The exaggerated projection of their limbs in turn invites the beholder to see and toggle between aspects of virtual space in the foreground (e.g., fussing over the wrappings of Osiris and the garments of the deceased), middle ground (e.g., the jackal-headed canopic jar on the register behind Anubis), and background (e.g., attending to the construction of the façade). In this way, the diminutive figures constitute the connective tissue of the shroud and its pictorial infrastructure. Seeing or recognizing these figures, precisely because they can be and often *are* neither seen nor recognized (even in the protracted duration of attentive beholding), is thus a recognition of pictoriality that initiates the iconographic succession. Whatever the actual eschatological significance of these figures might be, what makes them particularly salient and indeed historically significant here is that they demonstrate, if ambiguously so, how depiction and vision are thoroughly enmeshed.

THE LARVAL STAGE

So far, I have been arguing that the figure of the ghost in ancient art evinces modes of both pictorial and non- or extra-pictorial seeing, and that these modes might also be mutually reinforcing. In what follows, I wish to focus on the particular case of the Roman *larva*—a ghostly, barely fleshed skeleton—as a trenchant example of

how one might misrecognize the difference between them. Around the same time that Pliny was writing his ghost letter to Sura, Lucian was satirizing philosophical ruminations on the supernatural, and Plutarch was writing biographies about great statesmen and their ghostly encounters, the sophist and prose writer Apuleius wrote *The Apology*, a forensic speech that ostensibly recapitulates his own defense against the charge of sorcery, which he had allegedly used to seduce and swindle a rich widow named Pudentilla out of her fortune in Sabratha. Besides accusing Apuleius of concocting love potions and other deceptions to achieve his nefarious goals, the prosecutors also charged him with commissioning an ebony statuette with similarly magical purposes in mind. As Apuleius testifies, the plaintiffs identified the statuette as a wasted, ghostly body, a *larva*, which they further qualified as “ugly and horrible, looking like a skeleton” (*sceleti forma turpe et horribile*). Apuleius set out to refute their misrecognition of the statuette in a lengthy series of withering criticisms:

Your third lie was that it was manufactured in the thin or even entirely fleshless form of a frightful corpse, a quite horrible and ghostlike thing. But if you have found out for certain such a clear sign of magic, why didn't you summon me to produce it? Perhaps so as to be able to lie freely about something absent? Alas, you will not have the opportunity of stating such a falsehood, due to a fortunate habit of mine. For I usually carry with me, wherever I go, a statuette of some god, keeping it among my books. On feasts I offer up incense and wine to it, and sometimes an animal victim. So just now on hearing this utterly shameless lie about a “skeleton,” I ordered someone to run and get my small Mercury from the place where I am staying, that is the statuette manufactured for me in Oea by Saturninus. [To an attendant:] Please show it. Let them see it, hold it, examine it. So here you are, here is what this scoundrel called a skeleton! [To the accusers:] Now do you hear the outcries of all around? Do you hear the condemnation of your lie? Do you finally not feel ashamed of all these calumnies? Is this a skeleton, or a specter, is this what you called a demon? Is this statuette magical or rather a common ceremonial type?

Please take it, Maximus, and have a look at it. A sacred object can safely be handed to such pure and pious hands! Look how handsome its face is, full of the freshness of exercise, and how cheerful the features of the god are. Look how charmingly the down creeps over both cheeks, and how his curls show out just above his temples, how gracefully his cloak is tied up around his shoulders. Whoever dares to call this a skeleton, surely never looks at statues of gods or completely disregards them. In short, whoever thinks this is a ghost is clearly haunted himself.

May this god, the messenger between upper world and Underworld, call the wrath of the divine powers of both upon you, Aemilianus, as a punishment for your lie! May

he continually bring appearances of the dead before your eyes, and whatever shades, malevolent ghosts, spirits and spooks there are, and all nocturnal phantoms, all fears of the grave—from which you, through age and merit, are not that far away.⁷⁴

Magical images, used either for protection or harm, were commonplace in antiquity. What made this particular statuette so dangerous and suspect was not its association with the fairly standard set of apotropaic or talismanic effects, but rather the more sinister and ghostly links to the Underworld and the raising of the dead in particular—an especially reviled practice even within the already dodgy world of magic and sorcery.⁷⁵

The irony here, as several commentators have observed, is that Apuleius defends himself against the charge of sorcery by performing a bit of magic on the spot, effectively laying a curse at this end of his tirade about the image on those who have brought these charges against him. He does so through a complex interweaving of visual and verbal imagery, of seeing and saying. This in itself is a characteristic feature of such spells and incantations that appear in magical papyri, for example, where one repeats the name of the dead several times in order to make them appear—precisely the kind of effect that Apuleius intends when he calls upon his ebony statuette of Mercury (in the god's capacity as a conductor of souls to the Underworld, the darkness of which is slyly evoked by the materiality of the precious black wood) to unleash "appearances of the dead" before the eyes of the prosecutors.⁷⁶ But this constitutes only the final insult to the injury that Apuleius seeks to inflict on the quality of the arguments that have been brought to bear against him.

Over and again Apuleius takes aim at the status of visual evidence as it ostensibly pertains to the statuette, demonstrating how it neither conforms to the actual state of affairs or, what for him essentially amounts to the same thing, does not match up with the words that have been used to describe it. Indeed, one of the main takeaways in the passages above has to do with how empty the accuser's arguments become once you actually *look* (even if, of course, it can only ever attain the form of a kind of ekphrastic looking) at the image in question. He has the image brought to the stand, demonstrates it, and performs an admirable visual analysis of its formal aspects and iconography. The forensic examination of the statuette (even if the trustworthiness of his surrogates to produce the one in question is open to doubt) provides the key evidence that the accusers had ginned up the charges against Apuleius, who persuasively argues that it is plainly impossible, barring a self-implicating admission of impiety on their part, to construe or mistake—in other words, to *see*—the effigy of a god as a ghastly skeleton in the first place.⁷⁷

How do you know what you're looking at? Is it fearful or benevolent? A ghost or a god? These are the sorts of questions that Apuleius asks his readers to pose and

judge for themselves, although it's important to underscore the unmistakably judicial context and manner in which he adduces his evidence—namely, the wooden statuette—that turns out to be far more equivocal than he lets on. Of course, since readers of the *Apology* had only Apuleius's words to go on, the precision of the description becomes all the more essential. In effect, Apuleius seems to be using one of the principal rhetorical strategies in the orator's toolkit: that of *similitudo*, in which an audience listens to—and, by extension, “sees”—two halves of a given statement and judges whether they are, in fact, similar. As Lehoux observes of judicial rhetoric, “The eyes are stressed again and again in the theoretical discussions of argument by *similitudo*: eyes, pictures, images, light. It is not just that vision and visibility underscore the comparisons . . . but that vision and visibility underscore the entire epistemological force of comparison itself. Comparisons are convincing because they are visual. Seeing does big work.”⁷⁸ In this case, Apuleius's ekphrastic description of the statuette draws attention to the similarity between his own statements and the ebony image that he produces in court. By contrast, he shows how dissimilar the prosecution's statements fare by the same logic of comparison.

Rather than “statements,” however, it might be more accurate simply to say that Apuleius is concerned with the matter of which *words* are most applicable to the statuette. After producing the image in court and inviting his accusers to hold and examine it, he poses a series of interrelated questions that expose the incommensurability between the content of their accusations and the evidence at hand: “Is this a skeleton, is this a ghost, is this what you called a demon? (*Hicine est sceletus, haecine est larva, hocine est quod apellitabatis daemonium?*)” The literary qualities of Apuleius's forensic speech are on full display in this well-ordered trio of demonstrative, gendered pronouns: *hicine*, corresponding to the masculine *sceletus*; *haecine*, to the feminine *larva*; and *hocine*, to the neuter *daemonium*. The stylistics help underscore the way in which these spooky bedfellows are correlated members of the same class, with each one being conceptually nested inside the one that follows it.

What did the Romans see when they looked at a skeleton? On the one hand, as for us, a skeleton constituted a biological fact: a structure of bones or at the very least an emaciated corpse, the material residue of a once-vital configuration of squishy organs, marrow, muscles, sinews. On the other, it could be seen as a ghostly figure with a particularly malevolent temperament. While the former was more often described as a *sceletus* and the latter as a *larva*, the two terms seem to have been more or less interchangeable.⁷⁹ If mere skeletons and *larvae* resemble one another at a more or less superficial level, then it is ultimately because they share a common relation in death and the natural processes that make a body cease to resemble itself. It is a question, then, of a body that is fundamentally *de-formed* or *disfigured* in relation to its formerly recognizable condition—a kind of inverted rela-

tion of external and internal resemblance, a resemblance *through* dissemblance. And it is precisely this kind of inverted relation that Seneca, for example, seems to have in mind when he rattles off a list of supernatural creatures that none but the most childish of people would believe in, a group that includes Cerberus, the shades, and “the spectral garb (*larvalis habitum*) of those who are held together by naught but their unfleshed bones.”⁸⁰ Rather than a body reduced to nothing, Seneca suggests, the *larva* embodies the ghostly logic of the supplement.

These successions and recursions of resemblance and dissemblance help explain why the *larva* was regarded in Roman times not only as a gruesome, ghostly figure, but also as a kind of *memento mori*—one that was linked to the convivial atmosphere of the banquet, funerary and otherwise.⁸¹ A case in point is the corpus of bronze figurines of *larvae* with articulated limbs that appear in Italy from the beginning of the first century, well represented by an example at the Science Museum in London (plate 1.6). Petronius almost certainly has just this kind of object in mind in the following passage from the “Cena Trimalchionis” of Petronius’s *Satyricon*:

As we drank and admired each luxury in detail, a slave brought in a silver skeleton (*larvam*), made so that its joints and sockets could be moved and bent in every direction. He threw it down once or twice on the table so that the supple sections showed several attitudes (*aliquot figuras*), and Trimalcio said appropriately: “Alas for us poor mortals, all that poor mortal is nothing. So shall we be, after the world below takes us away (*Sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferet Orcus*). Let us live (*esse*) then while it can go well with us.”

Scholars have tended to focus with good reason on the Epicurean resonance of this passage and its invitation to exalt in the pleasures of life and strive for the attenuation of anxiety or pain. But at the same time, it is surely important that Petronius sets the very stage for such a pretentious philosophical meditation (one that, as John Bodel points out, plays on a dreadful pun on the word *esse* that can be read as either “live” or “eat”) by drawing attention to the intimate modes of interaction and display that frame how the figure is handled and seen.⁸² Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that in glyptics it recurs to representations of a figure usually interpreted as Prometheus sculpting the figure of a man using a skeleton as his armature (fig. 1.7).⁸³ To interact with a figurine such as this—to cast it down upon a table as Trimalchio does in order that one might appreciate how it expresses “several attitudes” (*aliquot figuras*) like a sculptor modeling a figure—is to delight in its manifold affordances to different beholders at different standpoints. One may see or recognize the figure as a skeleton, and more particularly perhaps its ghostly aspect as a *larva*. But one may also, as Trimalchio invites his guests to do, respond to that moment of recognition by seeing the *larva* alternatively as a ghostly depiction of



Fig. 1.7 Graeco-Roman ringstone showing Prometheus creating the first man, first century BCE. Chalcedony. I85. Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen. Photo: Public domain.

oneself at some point in the future (“So shall we be . . .”) now in this configuration, now in that configuration, and so on and so forth.⁸⁴

The playful, if disquieting, potential to pictorialize skeletons as *larvae* as proleptic, ruined versions of the self had pernicious consequences when it came to seeing *actual people* as pictures or artifacts like the figurine. Notoriously, the Romans often conflated the cremated materiality of blackened, ghostly bodies with the materiality of black bodies in flesh and blood.⁸⁵ While olive-skinned Mediterranean people could and often did masquerade as ghosts in ancient literature, Egyptians and especially Ethiopians (whose name in Greek literally means “burnt face,” which indexes racializing ancient theories of climatic zones and their inflection on the physical appearance of the body) came to be regarded as inherently ghostly on account of their visual aspect.⁸⁶ Among the variety of theatrical spectacles that were staged for Caligula’s amusement, Suetonius recalls that “A nocturnal performance besides was rehearsing, in which scenes from the lower world were represented by

Egyptians and Ethiopians,” thus objectifying the dark-skinned bodies of the performers emerging from a spatializing matrix of darkness.⁸⁷ A Latin inscription from Hadrumetum (present-day Sousse in Tunisia) in the *Anthologia Latina* makes the connection explicit:

The dregs of the Garamantes (an ancient civilization in ancient Libya) have come up into our region and the black slave rejoices in his pitch-black body. If the voice issuing from his lips did not make him sound human, the grim ghost (*horrida larva*) would be frightening on sight. Hadrumetum, may ill-omened Tartarus carry off your monster for itself! The abode of Dis should have him as a guardian.⁸⁸

Notice how the *visual* aspect of the black slave is dismissed as a hopelessly indiscernible index of his humanity that would remain a mere phenomenon were it not for the invisible, yet audible, tell of his voice.⁸⁹ This racializing topos of misrecognition recurs at the outset of Heliodorus’s swashbuckling romance, the *Aethiopica* (probably written in the third century CE). The protagonist Charikleia, stranded on the beach with her lover among a pile of dead bodies, is confronted by a band of Egyptian brigands whom she at first suspects may be ghosts (*eidōla*) on account of their “dusky color and savage aspect,” but quickly realizes her error.⁹⁰ The stakes of this case of mistaken identity are particularly acute in the novel, as Charikleia, the daughter of Queen Persinna of Ethiopia, discovers that the anomaly of her milky white skin was owed to the fact that Persinna was gazing at a painting of a naked Andromeda at the moment of her conception—a visual and virtually *sculptural* act that, according to the theory of maternal impression, “shaped the embryo to her (i.e., Andromeda’s) exact likeness.”⁹¹

Greek and Roman concepts and experiences of race and racism have been vociferously debated over the past several decades.⁹² Since the 1980s especially, pioneering scholars such as Frank M. Snowden Jr. and others have set out to argue that there was not a “color prejudice” in classical antiquity so much as a form of ethnocentrism that regarded as “Other” those people whose bodies were marked by various forms of racial difference. For Snowden, “the introduction of dark-skinned peoples into such contexts [i.e., the Underworld and the realm of the ghostly more generally] was a natural development” that was neither more nor less charged than the case of Gauls or Germans whose pallid complexions lent them a comparably, if conversely, ghostly aspect.⁹³ The result of this revisionist position has been that much of the scholarship on this topic in classical antiquity, especially that dealing with the visual evidence, has preferred to settle on the more anodyne label of “ethno-centrism” in order to assert that the Greeks and Romans had no concept, let alone *experience*, of what Foucault once called “traditional, historical racism” or

indeed of a racialized society, and that there existed merely what some have even called an “aesthetic preference.”⁹⁴ To be sure, there was no institutionalized or legislated form of racism in antiquity that precisely corresponds to modern models and techniques of biopolitical power. For that very reason, however, Snowden’s rather offhand remark about the symbolic associations between black people and ghosts being a “natural development” seems especially revealing. For, in claiming a natural basis for such cultural conventions or stereotypes, such a view effectively masks what I take to be the more pressing stakes of the premodern context, namely the historical and ideological constitution of subjects.

It remains a deeply significant, but entirely overlooked, fact that the Greeks and Romans never confuse a ghost for an Egyptian or an Ethiopian, but only the other way around. What is at stake here is a decidedly phenomenological question about the scene of recognition in which individuals are subjected to the imaging of difference. When someone takes an Ethiopian for a ghost in Greek and Latin literature (which continues in a variety of early Christian texts that handily swap out the ghostly for the demonic), it is never merely a matter of context or certain culturally engrained stereotypes about appearances or behaviors.⁹⁵ This moment of misrecognition or misidentification rather exposes a crisis of intersubjectivity and the kinds of relay mechanisms that work to constitute and ramify those stereotypes through repeated acts and representations.⁹⁶ These mechanisms are acutely and constitutively perceptual in nature. According to the language of ideological critique, it is the specular structure of ideology and its “(mis)recognition function” that interpellate individuals as subjects.⁹⁷ Yet, as these scenarios make clear, the ethical stakes of the matter are grounded in the inability or rather the refusal to see individuals as subjects in the first place.⁹⁸ Seeing racial difference here thus amounts to nothing less than the dehumanizing act of pictorializing *people*, of seeing them as bearing a natural resemblance to ghosts, to mere phenomena, and then supplementing or capitalizing on that basic perceived similarity.⁹⁹

Seeing difference of various kinds is thus predicated on the capacity to see similarity. But how exactly does seeing similarity work here? Let us return to Apuleius and the misidentification or misrecognition of the *larva*. Even if the similarity between skeletons and ghosts or *larvae* ultimately turns out to be a superficial one, it is still a kind of similarity for all that. How, on the other hand, do they relate to the third member of Apuleius’s class of images, namely demons or spirits? To turn once again to Lehoux’s discussion of how similarity or *similitudo* operates in Roman rhetoric, it seems helpful to call attention to his remark that “accounts pointing to bare similarity are inadequate in all contexts. Instead, classification transcends—perhaps we should even say trumps—similarity, and in fact similarity may emerge as a by-product of classification.”¹⁰⁰ It is in another one of Apuleius’s speeches,

namely the philosophical outline of Platonic demonology in his *On the God of Socrates*, where we learn the classificatory importance of demons that in turn comprise several subdivisions of their own:

In a second sense, too, the species of daemon can be defined as a human mind which has served the campaigns of life and foresworn its body: I find that this is commonly referred to in the ancient Latin language as a *Lemur*. And of these *Lemures*, the type which has as its assigned province the care of its descendants and holds possession of the house by means of its placated and peaceful power, is called the *Lar familiaris*; while the type which from its bad behavior in life is punished by having no fixed abode, and from a kind of exile of uncertain wandering, only a mild terror for virtuous humans, but harmful to the evil—that type most people call *Larvae*. When it is truly uncertain which sphere of operation belongs to any individual spirit and whether it is a *Lar* or a *Larva*, they call it by the name of *deus Manis*; the word “god” is clearly an honorific addition. For it is only these of this class that they call gods, who, having directed their course of life by prudence and justice, are commonly worshipped for their divine qualities by men and endowed with shrines and rites . . .¹⁰¹

Historians of religion have criticized certain aspects of Apuleius’s “taxonomy of ghosts,” most of all his characterization of *lemures* as benign or friendly spirits: Ovid, for example, presents a very different view in his account of the domestic rituals mentioned above.¹⁰² But the more important point here is that Apuleius establishes a taxonomy of Roman spirits by glossing the etymology of demons in Greek language and culture.

Significantly, in an earlier part of the *Apology* in which Apuleius defends his deep knowledge of certain species of fish associated with love magic, he makes the following remarks that highlight both the intertextuality of his work and the classificatory power of his argumentative strategy: “I will also have some passages read from my Latin writings in the same field of knowledge. Here you will notice not only lesser known facts, but also words not used before even by the Romans and, as far as I know, non-existent to this day. Through my won effort and study, I have derived these names from the Greek in such a manner that they are coined by a Latin mint.”¹⁰³ As with fish, so also with ghosts. For in the end, Apuleius’s “taxonomy of ghosts” is less a genuine Roman demonology or pneumatology, at least in any orthodoxical sense, than it is a procedure for producing facts about ghosts in a particular visual culture. In this sense, it seems closer in spirit to a kind of philosophical and rhetorical mode of discerning persuasive similarities that in turn betoken underlying classificatory schemes.

To understand how these schemes can cash out in terms of real, art-historical knowledge, it is useful to turn briefly to Lessing’s lesser-known essay, *How the An-*

cients Represented Death (1769). The purpose of this polemical essay was to defend Lessing's controversial but essentially correct position that the ancients did not, in fact, represent Death (*Thanatos/Mors*) as a skeleton, as was customary in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Lessing claimed that such skeletons—above all, the bronze figurines with articulated limbs discussed above—should be regarded as *larvae* and thus coterminous with ghosts, rather than with Death personified. Lessing's most important critical insight lies in his anticipation of the modern philosopher Nelson Goodman's "new riddle of induction" and its interpretive framework of time-dependent kind-predicates: thus, by comparing pairs of Greek and Latin words for death (*ker* and *thanatos* in Greek; *lethum* and *mors* in Latin), Lessing was able to assert that "without prejudice to the fact that in the one language as well as in the other, the two words became confounded in time and were finally employed as entirely synonymous."¹⁰⁴

Lessing insisted that each pair of words had initially named two different ideas about death: on the one hand, the necessity of death in a poetic sense where it might be conceptualized as early, violent, shameful, and so on; on the other, the biological fact of death and dying. In thinking about words and pictures dialectically—significantly, he makes frequent reference to Cesare Ripa's classic handbook of symbolic imagery, *Iconologia* (1592)—Lessing argues that pictures operate in a corresponding fashion, and that the ancients and we moderns might see very different things when looking at the same data of experience pertaining to morphologically similar or even identical items, in this case an emaciated figure. If we do not understand the difference between *ker* and *thanatos* or *lethum* and *mors*, or furthermore that between a mere skeleton and a *larva*, let alone an abstract representation of Death, Lessing asserts, then the fault is on us, the poverty of our own language, and the resemblances that hinder our attempts to think and to see in genuinely historical terms.

"BELIEVE ME, THE IMAGE IS MORE THAN IT APPEARS . . ."

This last section examines the issue of periodization prompted by Lessing's thought on ancient representations of death with greater precision by taking up my second theory of the ghost, namely the iconographic and stylistic successions of the Second Sophistic. I do so through a close reading of the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia that appears on only two extant Roman mythological sarcophagi that I take up again, in a different context, later on in chapter 3: the first, at S. Chiara in Naples; the second, in the Vatican Museum.¹⁰⁵ Each of these caskets in its own way deploys a particularly dense horizon of imagistic referentiality that extends the basic conceit of the objects discussed above within the visual culture of the Second Sophistic.

Within this antiquarian milieu that the sarcophagi constitute, successions and recursions of form and style from earlier Greek visual cultures betokened an aesthetic sensibility that was critical to the cultivation of *paideia* and its historicizing zeal for accessing and reconstituting forms of life in bygone historical periods.

While the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia has its origins in Homer, it was, as I indicated in the introduction, substantially and creatively elaborated on during the Second Sophistic in the second and third centuries CE. Despite a number of variations, virtually all of them begin with the same general conceit in which Protesilaus, willfully disregarding the prophecy that the first Greek to land on Trojan soil would also be the first to die, disembarked from his ship and fell shortly thereafter at the hands of Hector.¹⁰⁶ Moved by the grief of the newly widowed Laodamia, who had since fashioned a wax portrait (or perhaps a statue) of her beloved in his absence, the gods of the Underworld allowed the ghost of Protesilaus to return for one evening to say his good-byes.¹⁰⁷ But when the allotted time had ended and Protesilaus returned to Hades, Laodamia became inconsolable and resolved to be reunited with him in death, rather than live out her life in anguished solitude. On this point, classical authors flexed their most sadistically creative muscles by devising three different methods of Laodamia's suicide: first, and most commonly, by running herself through with a sword; second, by hanging; third, and perhaps most dramatically of all, by self-immolation.¹⁰⁸

This last method is given in the *Fabulae* of Hyginus (an early imperial compendium of Greek myths), whose juicier focus on Laodamia's erotic entanglements with the portrait has earned it a great deal of scholarly attention. According to him, the real trouble began when Laodamia's servant caught sight of her with the portrait *in flagrante delicto* and mistakenly thought she had taken up with another lover, resolving to tell her father Acastus on the spot. As soon as Acastus had found out the truth about the portrait and his daughter's increasingly deranged attachment to it, he decided to put an end to the matter at once and ordered the image to be destroyed on a pyre. But Laodamia, in a spectacular coup de grâce, couldn't bear to see the portrait and its powers disappear forever, and cast herself upon the pyre in a defiant fit of tragic satisfaction. Many more versions still could be called to mind, and it is worth stressing that Euripides himself wrote a play that probably influenced all of these in some way, although his work survives only in scant fragments that preclude any secure date for its completion.¹⁰⁹ Before recalling those other versions, however, I want to turn to the depiction of the myth on the earlier S. Chiara sarcophagus that dates to around 150 CE (fig. 1.8).

The left short side of the S. Chiara sarcophagus begins the story *in medias res* with Protesilaus appearing as a ghost in the Underworld before Pluto and Persephone, imploring for the opportunity to visit his widowed wife. The right short side bookends the nocturnal narrative of the lovers, shown in their final moments of



Fig. 1.8 Protesilaus sarcophagus, ca. 150 CE. Marble. Santa Chiara, Naples.

Photo: Ilia A. Shurygin.

their reunion. Rather than establishing a more customary sequence of episodes in continuous narrative as does the later sarcophagus, the front panel of the S. Chiara casket presents us with a single, pregnant moment: the fateful homecoming of Protesilaus. The event is flanked on either end of the panel by the figures of Luna and Sol, divine personifications of the moon and the sun, that mark the passage of time allotted for this brief reunion. On the left, Protesilaus charges onto the scene from an arched gateway that doubles as an exit from Hades and an entrance to his home. Escorting him are the figures of the *Ianitor Orci*, the guard of Hades, and Hermes, identified here only by his winged boots. The appearance of these figures has evidently rattled the entourage of startled women who move quickly to block their sudden entry.

The interruption of this scene of domestic interiority points to an especially salacious part of the myth in its various retellings: the Dionysiac element that explained how Laodamia tried to cope, infamously, with the absence of her beloved. Statius, for example, focused on the more scandalous version in which Laodamia (“she whom cruel lamentation made maenad”) fashioned a statue of the god Dionysus with the portrait features of Protesilaus and, in her frenzied adoration of the effigy, thus laid bare her all-too-quick transition from dolorous widow to dissolute tramp.¹¹⁰ Similarly, in a later passage from the *Imagines*, Philostratus describes a painting that depicts an identical theme—that of a woman committing suicide to join her husband in death—except that he draws a sharp distinction between the pious dignity of the woman in *that* picture and the example of Laodamia, quipping that “she departs, not like the wife of Protesilaus, wreathed with the garlands of the Bacchic rites she had been celebrating . . . but keeps her beauty unadorned and just as it was.”¹¹¹ Accordingly, the figure of the heroine on the S. Chiara sarcophagus is surrounded by the accoutrements of the Dionysiac rites she performs. Holding a tympanum in her left hand, she appears dressed like the maenads of

that cult which even her own maidservants emulate. Unlike them, however, she has her left breast exposed in an immodest breach of decorum that evokes the sort of sexual antics to which Philostratus alludes. Laodamia thus bears all the outward appearances of having been caught in a compromising situation for an ostensibly devoted and modest wife. I will elaborate on the seemingly perverse desirability of Laodamia as a mythological exemplum for the deceased in a later chapter, but for present purposes I simply wish to stress the degree to which this sarcophagus seems to delight in dwelling on the orgiastic rituals to which Laodamia so enthusiastically, if notoriously, devoted herself.

The source of Laodamia's meretricious behavior lies just behind her and her protective throng of maidservants. Swooping diagonally from right to left along a shallow, yet faceted, plane of relief that ends on a herm statue of the god Dionysus, a hanging curtain (*parapetasma*) signals both the domestic nature of this intimate scene and its gendered space. This scene calls to mind the significance of the portrait that Laodamia had fashioned as a lifeless substitute for her husband. Again, the literary sources contribute a range of conflicting testimony regarding what this portrait actually *looked* like. In the *Heroides*, for example, Ovid describes a powerful mimetic and magical resemblance between the portrait and its referent at the close of Laodamia's fateful missive to Protesilaus:¹¹²

Nonetheless, while you, a soldier in a distant world, will be bearing arms, I keep a waxen image to give back your features to my sight; it hears the caressing phrase, it hears the words of love that are yours by right, and it receives my embrace. Believe me, the image is more than it appears (*crede mihi, plus est, quam quod videatur, imago*); add but a voice to the wax, Protesilaus it will be. On this I look, and hold it to my breast in place of my real Lord, and complain to it, as if it could talk back.¹¹³

The mythographer Pseudo-Apollodorus, perhaps a contemporary of Ovid's, asserts that the portrait was a likeness of Protesilaus, or more precisely that it was "nearly resembling" or "suchlike" the hero (*eidōlon Prōtesilao paraplēsion*) in a manner that anticipates Pausanias's later mention of the *eikōn* of the *eidōlon* of Actaeon mentioned above.¹¹⁴ On the sarcophagus, however, the head of the herm statue is endowed with the traits and attributes of Dionysus, and in his mature form at that, including a furry beard and a leafy wreath. Perhaps, then, the herm is "just" a god and has nothing to do with Protesilaus: it certainly doesn't *look* like Protesilaus, at least with regard to his youthful and beardless appearance depicted elsewhere. Nevertheless, the addition of an altar stacked with offerings placed directly in front of it invites us to consider the possibility that Protesilaus is present here *in formam deorum*, a fitting alibi for Laodamia's clandestine activities.

Should we accept this possibility, however, another problem presents itself: the



Fig. 1.9 Protesilaus sarcophagus (detail of front panel), ca. 150 CE. Marble. Santa Chiara, Naples. Photo: Author.

evocative presence of a deeply veiled figure lurking behind the hanging drapery. There will be more to say later on about the phenomenology of drapery and its relation to affective situations of grief, but for now it is simply important to observe the way in which this ghostly figure is doubly occluded from the gaze of the beholder in a manner that evokes a distinctive feature of carved drapery in the sculptural aesthetics of the Hellenistic period more generally: a form of transparency which, instead of indicating the form and flesh of a body underneath, reveals only more drapery.¹¹⁵ If we imagine the experience of ancient beholders gazing upon the casket's imagery within the dimly lit conditions of the tomb chamber, the relatively low relief of the sarcophagus would have danced in the flickering lamplight, at once animating the drama of the depicted scene while rendering many of its details virtually invisible.

The sculptor of the sarcophagus anticipated and exploited this interplay of light and shadow. An oblique view reveals a small nose peeking out from behind a fold of fabric that recedes back into it when seen frontally (fig. 1.9).¹¹⁶ Yet even this shift of aspect frustrates the desire for a more comprehensive view, for an extreme oblique angle of vision reveals nothing that the curious beholder might wish to see except the *materia informis* of its marmoreal surface (fig. 1.10). This is precisely the



Fig. 1.10 Protesilaus sarcophagus (detail of front panel), ca. 150 CE. Marble.
Santa Chiara, Naples. Photo: Author.

effect that Georges Didi-Huberman calls “the aporia of the detail,” since, he asserts, “even as it aims for a more precise form, the close-up gaze manages only to undo matter and form, and, doing this, despite itself, it condemns itself to a veritable tyranny of the material.”¹¹⁷ The disjunct modalities of perception and cognition evoke Horace’s *ut pictura poesis*, a famous line which, beyond the mere comparison of poetry and painting, posits a structural affinity between the two media that is grounded in a complex phenomenology: “Poetry is like painting: one picture attracts you more, the nearer you stand, another, the farther away. One favors shade, another will wish to be seen in the light, showing no fear of the critic’s sharp insight.”¹¹⁸ The sarcophagus imagery intimates a kind of phenomenological corollary to Horace’s insight, namely that ghosts are somehow like images and pictures in that they can be imaged or seen *as* pictures.

What is especially fascinating here is the way in which the three-dimensional wax effigy that Laodamia had fashioned is translated into the spatially composite medium of relief sculpture that in turn evokes other kinds of mediated pictures. Indeed, the whole area around the *parapetasma* can be seen as a collection of various sculptural types that emerge in a series of iconographic successions. Just behind the nurse, another woman joins the fray carrying a platter of sacrificial offerings on top of her head at the very edge of the frame, perhaps evoking the form of a caryatid figure. The servant leaning against the herm as she watches the drama unfold, transfixed as if in a trance, adopts a pose that is reminiscent of Polymnia, one of the nine Muses. Even the figure of Sol evokes representations of the god in his capacity as Sol Invictus. Between the two women are the two images in question that share a tight relationship with each other: the herm statue of Dionysus, the god to whom Laodamia had lavished so much attention in Protesilaus’s absence, and the veiled figure of Protesilaus—a figure that remains visible as both the ghost of the hero (despite his actual presence in the bedchamber) *and* the portrait she had fashioned in his stead. Scale is crucial here, since the effigy is life size, hence large enough for her to do all the sorts of prurient things that the ancient commentators never tired of rehearsing and pathologizing.

As Maurizio Bettini has shown, the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia corresponds to an ancient formula that played out, in various configurations, among three figures: a lover, a beloved, and an image.¹¹⁹ For most, this involved the consequences in store for an obsessive lover left alone with the image of an absent beloved; for Lucretius, the objects of our sexual desire *were* the images, their perceived presence mere phantasms of feeling:

But a pretty face or a pleasing complexion gives the body nothing to enjoy but insubstantial images, which all too often pathetic hope scatters to the winds. When a thirsty man tries to drink in his dreams but is given no drop to quench the fire in his

limbs, he clutches at images of water with fruitless effort and in the middle of a rushing stream he remains thirsty as he drinks. Just so in the midst of love Venus teases lovers with images.¹²⁰

The comparison Lucretius draws between the Tantalus-like figure of a man trying to slake his thirst in a dream and an insatiable lover seems especially apposite to the sarcophagus imagery. But the more general points he makes here are likewise reflected in the Ovidian retellings of the myth. Returning to the *Heroides*, we notice that Laodamia describes her recurring, nightmarish visions of Protesilaus that she can assuage only with the wax portrait she keeps of him:

I, in my widowed couch, can only court a sleep with lying dreams; while true joys fail me, false ones must delight. But why does your face, all pale, appear before me? Why from your lips comes many a complaint? I shake slumber from me, and pray to the apparitions of night; there is no Thessalian altar without smoke of mine . . .¹²¹

In the *Remedia Amoris*, Ovid echoes Lucretius's anxiety about images by advising the heartsick lover to destroy the images of the absent beloved he hopes to banish from his memory, once again making an example of Laodamia and her ersatz Protesilaus.¹²² Laodamia thus comes to embody the very antithesis of Ovid's advice: worship the portrait of the beloved, fetishize it, let the ghosts in.

The depiction of the altar on the S. Chiara sarcophagus sets the stage for this sort of oneiric, even epiphanic, vision and its discomfiting effects. Indeed, the iconography of the front panel—not least because of its unusual presentation of a single, pregnant moment in which the responses of the figures are instantaneously registered, but never fully resolved—suggests that Protesilaus's abrupt appearance into Laodamia's bedchamber produces a hallucinatory effect precisely because of the way he destabilizes the network of mimetic resemblances that sustain the relation between his handsome ghost, the fallen hero in faraway Troy, and the portrait. Most interesting perhaps is the way in which the sculptor has foregone the iconographic convention of representing ghosts as dream visions in Greek art from at least the fourth century BCE—a choice that seems calculated to seize upon precisely the kind of undecidability that the scene is designed to capture, that is, Laodamia's amazement and incredulity at what has been put before her eyes.

Throughout antiquity, oneiric apparitions of ghosts resembled those of gods to the extent that they were often regarded as being within close physical proximity of the dreamer. Beginning in the first quarter of the fifth century BCE, vase-painters began to depict Hypnos touching or sometimes hovering over the dreamer's head.¹²³ Depictions of ghosts would later follow suit, despite the fact that they had had a precedent in Homer, where the ghost of Patroclus is said to stand above Achilles's

sleeping head (*stē d'ar' huper kephalēs*). Thus, as E. R. Dodds observed, “the dream is said not only to ‘visit’ the dreamer (*phoitan, episkopein, proselthein*, etc.), but also to ‘stand over’ him (*epistēmi*).”¹²⁴ Among Latin authors, the analogous verb *adsisto* is often used to describe ghosts appearing to people in both sleep and wakeful hours; Propertius, when describing the ghost of Cynthia leaning over his bedside, even uses the verb *incumbere*.¹²⁵ These “epiphany” or messenger dreams differ a great deal from our modern conception of “episode” dreams that convey a sequence or at least a configuration of events.¹²⁶ This is not to say that the ancients didn’t have episodic dreams as well, of course, but that messenger dreams were endowed with a certain amount of prestige for the kind of authority and special knowledge (about the future, for example) that they bestowed upon the dreamer. Most important of all, they were thought to exist independently of the dreamer in real space, rather than the “black box” of the brain: thus in Homer the phantom of Iphthime enters through a keyhole to visit Penelope, and by the fifth century CE Dracontius has the ghost of Agamemnon visit Orestes and Pylades simultaneously in a dream before flying off (*volitans*) to Athens of his own accord.¹²⁷ Tellingly, the ancients didn’t say that they “had” dreams, but rather that they “saw” them.

Earlier depictions of these ghostly messenger dreams in classical art help register what is distinctive about the sarcophagus imagery (plate 1.7). One of the most remarkable examples can be seen on a bell-krater attributed to the Eumenides Painter (ca. 380–360 BCE), now in the Louvre, where the ghost of Clytemnestra is shown touching the head of one of the dreaming Furies.¹²⁸ In a scene that corresponds to Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* (94ff), the ghost of Clytemnestra attempts to rouse the Furies to continue their pursuit of Orestes, recently (or about to be) purified at Apollo’s sanctuary, shown to the right. Her first words to them—“You—how can you sleep? Awake, awake—what use are sleepers now?”—distinguish her “reality” or separation from the more typical world of dreams (i.e., those which are episodic in nature).¹²⁹ For in fact, as we learn toward the end of this scene, the Furies are dreaming about the very pursuit she orders. As A. L. Brown has argued, the successful staging of this scene requires that the logic of its dramatic presentation be maintained despite whatever formal inconsistencies may be said to inhere within it.¹³⁰ The main “formal consistency” to which he refers is the fact that objectively speaking, at least, the Furies should only be able to see either the oneiric apparition of Clytemnestra *or* the dream about their pursuit of Orestes, but hardly both at once. The dramaturgical enactment of the scene, and not just a suspension of disbelief, is what allows this inconsistency to be overcome in a sort of “Gestalt-switch.”¹³¹

A similar operation exists within the vase-painting, albeit at a further remove: it is a picture of a dramatic presentation that it both depicts and complements according to a different set of possibilities and constraints.¹³² By representing the ghost of Clytemnestra within the shared pictorial space of the Furies (who them-

selves belong to a special order of visibility, it should be emphasized), the painter invites the beholder to suppose that she exists as a non-subjective object of vision that is similarly visible to the Furies, the audience of the play, and the beholders of the vase who see this picture. By depicting the ghost of Clytemnestra touching the head of one of the Furies, the painter calls attention to what Sigmund Freud would later call “figurability” (*Darstellbarkeit*) in the operations of the dream-work.¹³³ The depiction of her touch is a pictorial mechanism that ties together the visual operations of dreaming with the visual operations of painting: the depiction both represents these operations and shows that it is representing them.¹³⁴ Thus it is not merely an instance of showing the ghost of Clytemnestra “waking” the Furies, not least because this would depict a very unusual way of doing so. The suggestion of this touch is compounded, moreover, by a multiplicity of similar conventions for bridging the gulf between the visible and the invisible, exteriority and interiority.

Similarly, the iconography of hands does important work on the S. Chiara sarcophagus in terms of the way these appendages diagram the car’s cradle of gazes that crisscross the whole of the front panel among the various figures.¹³⁵ Indeed, the sculptor seems to have gone out of his way to figure an extravagant mirroring of gestures and their ricocheting, rebounding effects across a rigidly gendered space. Indeed, it is the upraised palm of one of Laodamia’s maidservants that blocks the intrusion of the three men. Her gesture is echoed by that of Sol on the border of the scene to the right, suggesting that his own gesture, although linked to representations of Sol Invictus in statuettes, likewise carries a prohibitive significance in the sense that it signals the rising of the sun and thus the end of the allotted time for the impassioned lovers. But perhaps the most interesting interplay of this manual mapping of the narrative scene can be seen in the handmaid and the old nurse hovering on either side of Laodamia in a protective huddle. Each one looks toward Protesilaus but points her hand at the other so that their fingertips make contact and generate a charge that gives a visible, even quasi-tactile, form to the confrontation of gazes between the lovers. The younger handmaiden’s hand pointing down toward Laodamia, coupled with the heroine’s own hand raised up to her mouth in hushed astonishment, produces a figural and perceptual uncertainty about what exactly it is that Laodamia, and we, are seeing.

In a different context, Jonathan Crary has described the figurative potential of hands and fingers to operate as key elements “in a system of deflection, in which vision is bound up in a relational field within which every point of fixation is a deferral and a relay to another one.”¹³⁶ A system of deflection similarly governs the sarcophagus imagery. Although I wish to avoid the suggestion that these reliefs should be seen as a mere “illustration” of Ovid’s *Heroides*, not least since there was a robust mythographic tradition that continued well into the second century long after its publication, it is nonetheless striking how the images convey the intensely

ocularcentric quality of that poem—and of the Latin elegiac tradition more generally—into sculpted form:

As long as I could gaze upon my lord, to gaze was my delight, and I followed your eyes ever with my own; when I could no longer see you, I still could see your sails, and long your sails detained my eyes. But after I descried no more either you or your flying sails, and what my eyes rested on was naught but only sea, the light, too, went away with you, the darkness rose about me, my blood retreated, and with failing knee I sank, they say, upon the ground.¹³⁷

As if picking up where Ovid's poem left off, Laodamia lies on the ground, stupefied at the newfound vision of her husband whom she had lost. There will be more to say about the links between elegy and vision later on, but for now I simply wish to stress how the delicate gestural communication of this scene engenders a fundamental uncertainty or anxiety about seeing the figures *qua* figures on the one hand, and seeing them as illusory images or perceptual "mistakes" on the other. Rather than depicting ghosts in ways that are emphatically marked by differences of scale or even by figures that resemble the living in almost every respect but indicate their ghostly status by pointing to the ground or hovering by the tomb (as with the *eidōla* on the *lekkythoi*), what is distinctive here is the way in which ghosts are thoroughly camouflaged in the field of vision and presented as truly indiscernible with their living counterparts.

A similar configuration of imagistic relations and perceptual uncertainty presents itself on the Vatican sarcophagus, produced about two decades after the S. Chiara example, around 170 CE (fig. 1.11). Since I attend to this piece in depth in a later chapter (which gives rather short shrift to the one from S. Chiara), and since I have already established the key episodes of the myth above, I wish to focus briefly on two discrete episodes in the imagery as they pertain to the topic under discussion, namely the recursive depiction of ghosts through constitutively visual means. Although it relies on more conventional Roman approaches of continuous and biographical narrative, and has been duly criticized for this in contradistinction to the absorptive synchrony of its ostensibly more "Greek" counterpart in Naples (in a manner that strongly, if implicitly, builds on Lessing's criticism of pictorial extensions in time), I want to make a more historical argument for the underappreciated sophistication of this casket that will have important ramifications for subsequent chapters.¹³⁸

The design of the front panel of the sarcophagus, which follows the scene of Protesilaus's leave-taking from Laodamia and departure for Troy on the left short side, comprises a rapid sequence of six episodes that are presented in a virtually seamless fashion (with the exception of the central scene that is more or less discrete) to the beholder. Briefly, these show Protesilaus's encounter with Hector on the shores of



Fig. 1.11 Protésilas sarcophagus, ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Mont Allen.

Troy; his death and transformation into a ghost; his return to the upper world; his reunion with Laodamia; the heroine's suicide and immediate transformation into a ghost herself; and the return of Protésilas to the Underworld, represented synecdochically with the figures of Sisyphus, Ixion, and Tantalus and their eternal punishments. Two of these episodes capture my attention here: Protésilas's encounter with Hector, and Laodamia's suicide.

At the far left of the front panel, Protésilas is depicted having already passed through the gateway of his home, now stepping down the gangplank of a ship that has just landed at Troy, where Hector awaits to fulfill the prophecy that the first Greek to land on Trojan soil will be the first to die (fig. 1.12). At the base of the gangplank, in the following scene, it is evident that the deed has already been done: splayed out on the beach, the corpse of Protésilas testifies to Laodamia's worst fears come true. Rising out of his lifeless body, a deeply veiled figure, the ghost of Protésilas, comes face to face with Hermes Psychopompos, the conductor of souls to the Underworld.¹³⁹ What has gone unnoticed here is the way in which even the living body of the hero has been likened to an image, namely a statue of a wounded warrior, a *volueratus deficiens*.¹⁴⁰ While many versions of this statue exist, with the fifth-century sculptor Cresilas having been credited with making the bronze original, the depiction of Protésilas in the relief most strongly recalls two versions of the statue in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 1.13) and a more fragmentary copy in the British Museum, both of them Roman marble copies of the Antonine period, and thus contemporary with the Vatican sarcophagus.¹⁴¹ Although it is by



Fig. 1.12 Protésilas sarcophagus (detail of the death of Protésilas on the front panel), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: G. Singer, DAI Inst. Neg. 72.613.

no means an exact citation—a fact that is not so problematic since the relationship between the Roman copy and the Greek original is itself unclear and also since, as I argue in chapter 3, the depiction of Protésilas on the sarcophagus evinces a specific formal choice designed to obscure the sex of the handsome hero with his lowered right arm and raised right leg—the similarities are striking enough to warrant a closer look. The most salient detail is that of the plank on which the figure of the hero stands. On both the New York and London copies, the plank is shown with sculpted wavelets underneath, and it was precisely this detail that led scholars to identify the statue as Protésilas upon its discovery. The discovery of a small incision in the right armpit (no blood is sculpted in low relief, as was customary, but was probably indicated only with paint) has led to a more agnostic position on this well-known statue.¹⁴² Both the statue and the image of Protésilas on the sar-



Fig. 1.13 Statue of a wounded warrior, ca. 138–181 CE. Marble. 25.116.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Public domain.

cophagus are helmeted, and it is generally believed that the statue held a shield in his left hand like the figure of Protesilaus.

For present purposes, the question of whether or not the New York and London copies of the statue represent Protesilaus is of less concern than the fact that the depiction of Protesilaus on the Vatican sarcophagus recurs to *some* type of sculpted marble image, even and especially if it is not an exact quotation of it. This becomes an especially significant point in light of Hector's presence within the tightly packed composition. Although he is nearly elided between the two scenes, even though it is his deadly presence that sutures them together, it is striking how he forms a kind of visual antithesis to Protesilaus: he too wears a helmet, albeit a Corinthian one; he carries a shield in his left hand; and the folds of his *chlamys* lower down on the body are shown as a perfect mirror image to those of his Greek foe. Of especial interest, however, is Hector's shield device of the severed head of Medusa. The same device can be found on many Roman sarcophagi that evoke the deathly power of her gaze in a manner that is obviously appropriate to the mortuary function of the casket. On the Vatican sarcophagus, however, the resonance of Medusa's petrifying gaze seems to do something cleverer still: for if we accept that the depiction of Protesilaus evokes a statue—and a copy of a statue at that—then the conceit of the imagery, like Antonio Canova's famous marble statue of Perseus gazing at the severed head of Medusa he holds in hand (fig. 1.14), elicits the suggestion that Protesilaus has effectively been turned to stone and killed dead in his tracks.

As with the scene of Protesilaus's death, the depiction of Laodamia's suicide evinces a similar collapsing of space and time. Within the very same space of the bedroom, the deeply veiled ghost of Laodamia looms over the heroine herself at what appears to be the same moment she plunges a dagger into her breast as Protesilaus averts his eyes at the edge of the couch. Housed within an aedicular shrine, the portrait of Protesilaus seems to have been adorned on the forehead with a fillet, thus giving it a Dionysiac charge that is complemented by the thyrsus to the left of the shrine as well as the various accoutrements underneath the couch. Moreover, like the representation on the S. Chiara example, it too is veiled. Yet in this case, the image has been reduced to a portrait bust, rather than a life-size effigy. While it may be difficult to imagine how Laodamia would have "consorted" with the portrait apart from lavishing it with her kisses, the format evokes that of the Roman *imago* more generally.

On the one hand, the image of Protesilaus recalls the famous wax *imagines* that were stored in small wooden cupboards in the atrium of aristocratic Roman households.¹⁴³ No such mask survives, but literary testimony describes them being worn by actors during elaborate funerary rituals that evoked the esteemed genealogy of the noble family. Nevertheless, the ancestral memory preserved by such masks could constitute the stuff of dreams as when, in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, Sci-



Fig. 1.14 Antonio Canova, *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, 1804–1806. Marble. 67.110.1. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Public domain.

pio Aemilianus dreams that he sees the ghost of his adoptive grandfather Africanus “taking that shape which was familiar to me from his portrait rather than from his person (*ea forma, quae mihi ex imagine eius quam ex ipso erat notior*).”¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the portrait of Protesilaus resembles more commonplace portraits of the deceased in Roman funerary art. The bust portraits set into aedicular shrines in the Flavian-era Tomb of the Haterii offer perhaps the closest parallel with the depiction on the Vatican sarcophagus, but one could also point to the *klinē* monuments of

the late Flavian and early Trajanic periods that often show the deceased reclining on a couch while holding the portrait of their beloved who had predeceased them (fig. 1.15). Such imagistic allusions are entirely consistent with the commemorative referentiality of Roman mythological sarcophagi that insert contemporary, or at least recognizably Roman, sepulchral monuments within the timelessness of myth in order to anchor the emotional situation of the bereaved in the living present.¹⁴⁵

The Vatican sarcophagus evinces a ghostly dilation of time with its elastic compression and extension of narrative scenes as well as its evocation of the mythic past in the historical present. What is more, it does so through a concerted manipulation of style on the short sides of the casket.¹⁴⁶ On the left short side, as I mentioned, Protesilaus is shown bidding his farewell to Laodamia and then, just to the right of this scene, departing for Troy (fig. 1.16). Significantly, the hero is shown wearing only a *chlamys* when saying good-bye to Laodamia, shown seated and veiled in front of a *parapetasma* marking the interior of the palace, whereas in the subsequent scene he is fully suited up and wears his military skirt. Both the style and the content of these two scenes strongly evoke the cool ethos of stone grave markers in classical Athens, such as that of Philoxenos and his wife Philoumene, ca. 400 CE (fig. 1.17). By contrast, the right short side of the casket depicts the damned trio of Sisyphus, Ixion, and Tantalus in an emphatically Hellenistic style reserved for barbarians, giants, and other figures whose fleshy, beleaguered bodies are marked by their suffering or pathos (fig. 1.18). Indeed, one can even see the figure of Sisyphus as a quotation of an Atlas figure supporting a heavy weight on his shoulders (fig. 1.19); the splayed body of Ixion on his wheel as one of the dead giants from the so-called “Lesser Attalid Group” (fig. 1.20); and the stretched-out, riven body of Tantalus, his legs bound tightly together, as a transformed Hanging Marsyas (fig. 1.21). Certainly, there is more going on here than a random selection of sculptural references. Rather, as has long been demonstrated, there is a kind of underlying rhetorical, semiotic structure of Roman art in which certain styles are motivated by the given content: in this case, the pronounced classical style of the left short side rhymes with the ethos of the leave-taking scene, while the Hellenistic style of the right short side rhymes with the pathos of the tortured souls in the Underworld.¹⁴⁷

As a way of tying all of these threads together, I’d like to conclude by considering another, more historiographical way of looking at the ghostly temporality of the imagery on the Vatican sarcophagus—its allusive mixing of styles that do not “belong” together, its iconographic successions and recursions, its interlacing of narrative time by rending it apart and then suturing it up again. Indeed, the problem of time seems to have haunted this object since its discovery: Pietro Santi Bartoli’s 1693 engravings of the sarcophagus—known at that time as the “Barberini sarcophagus,” after the illustrious family who owned the land where the tomb was

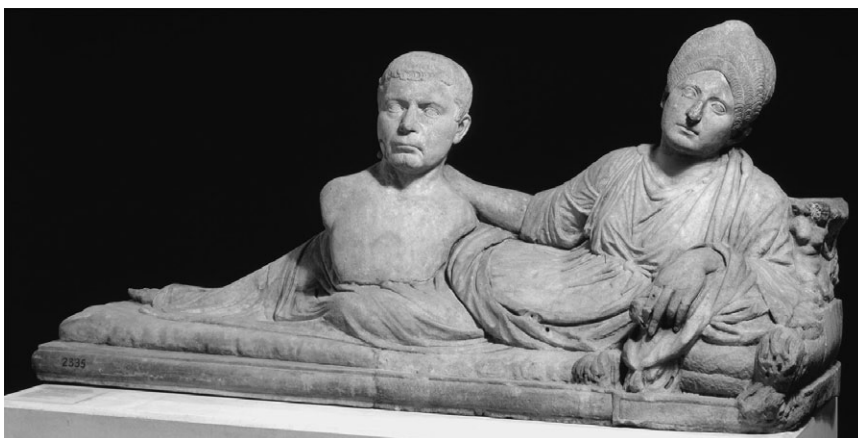


Fig. 1.15 Kline monument with reclining woman holding portrait of her deceased husband, ca. 100–110 CE. Marble. 1858,0819.1. © Trustees of the British Museum, London.



Fig. 1.16 Protésilas sarcophagus (left short side), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Mont Allen.



Fig. 1.17 Grave stele of Philoxenos with his wife Philoumene, ca. 400 BCE. Athens. Marble. JPM. Inv. 83.AA.378. Photo: J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California.



Fig. 1.18 Protesilaus sarcophagus (right short side), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Mont Allen.

found—demonstrate the contemporary antiquarian interest in the problem of how to make sense of the narrative complexity of the sarcophagus imagery (fig. 1.22).¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, Bartoli assigns the figures and scenes a sequential numerical order with an explanatory table below the image that elucidates each episode into a set of classificatory rubrics (e.g., all of the figures on the left side of the front panel all the way up through and including Laodamia are interpreted as *Traiectus ac transitus animarum ad inferos*). And yet, for all of his careful precision and scrutiny, Bartoli failed to identify the myth represented on the casket. That honor would later go to Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who was the first to recognize and publish it as such in his *Unpublished Ancient Monuments Explained and Illustrated* (1767), which first appeared three years after his magnum opus, *History of the Art of Antiquity*.¹⁴⁹

That Winckelmann was the very first to recognize the myth of Protesilaus and his ghostly return to Laodamia constitutes something of an acute historical irony. In his account of Aby Warburg, who once called the discipline of art history a *Gespensstergeschichte für ganz Erwachsene*, or a “ghost story for grownups,” Didi-Huberman situates the madness of Warburg’s method as the foil to the systematicity and ideality of Winckelmann’s historicism.¹⁵⁰ Beginning with the nineteenth-century critic Quatremère de Quincy’s apt characterization of Winckelmann as “the first who dared to decompose Antiquity, to analyze the times,” Didi-Huberman draws out both the Enlightenment rationality and the melancholy sensibility



Fig. 1.19 Farnese Atlas. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.
Photo: © Vanni Archive/Art Resource, NY. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original.

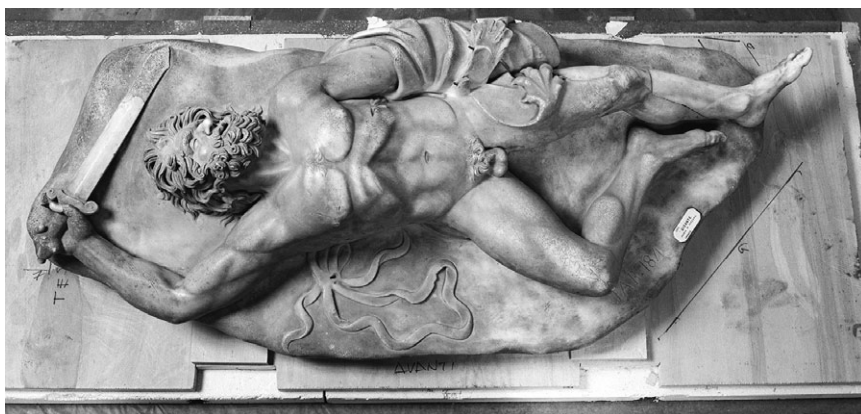


Fig. 1.20 Dead Giant. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.
Photo: DAI Inst. Neg. 93.916. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original.

undergirding Winckelmann's approach to antiquity that he makes explicit toward the end of *History of the Art of Antiquity*: "we study the copies of the originals more attentively than we should have done the originals themselves if we had been in full possession of them. In this particular we are very much like those who wish to have an interview with spirits, and who believe that they see them when there is nothing to be seen."¹⁵¹ For Didi-Huberman, responding to this evocative passage, "This, then, is what the modern historian becomes: someone who evokes the past, saddened by its definitive loss. He no longer believes in phantoms (soon, in the course of the nineteenth century, he will no longer believe in anything but the 'facts')."¹⁵² Indeed, one could trace a more or less direct line of genealogical relationships between Winckelmann's approach to this one particular object, both intellectually and even with respect to the neoclassical style of its line drawing (in contradistinction to the earlier drawing in the *Codex Coburgensis*, for example) and, at the turn of the twentieth century, Carl Robert's encyclopedic undertaking, *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs*, begun in the last decade of the nineteenth century (with the volume in which Protesilaus appears published in 1919), that aimed at nothing less than to bring together all known examples of Roman sarcophagi and their various forms of historical documentation (fig. 1.23).¹⁵³

In 1923, Warburg began work on an ambitious, if unusual plan to realize what he called "an art history without a text," a *Bilderatlas* bearing the comprehensive title *Mnemosyne, A Picture Series Examining the Function of Preconditioned Antiquity-Related Expressive Values for the Presentation of Eventful Life in the Art of the European Renaissance*.¹⁵⁴ *Mnemosyne* consisted of seventy-nine panels and over 2,000 photographs at the time of Warburg's death and traced the scholar's idiosyncratic



Fig. 1.21 Hanging Marsyas from the Esquiline. Marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome.
Photo: © Vanni Archive/Art Resource, NY. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original.

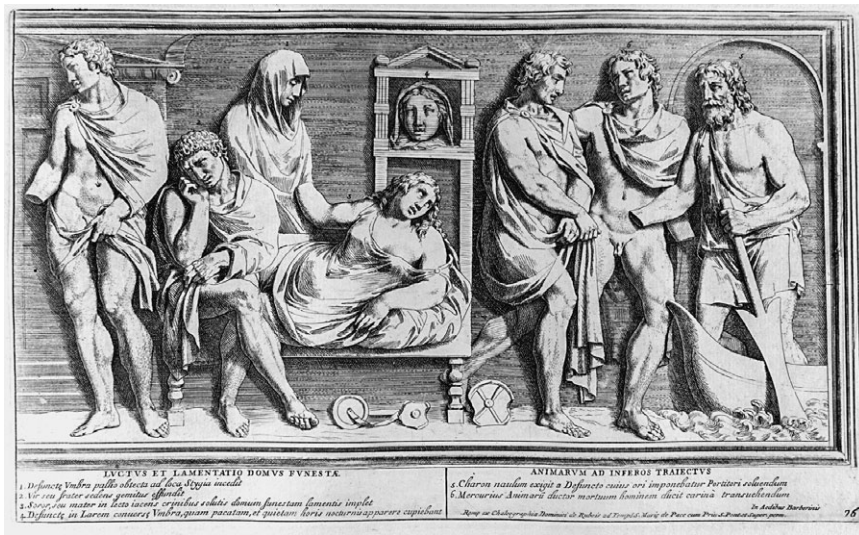


Fig. 1.22 Pietro Santo Bartoli and Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Admiranda romanarum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia anaglyphico opere elaborate* (Rome: Ioanne Iacobo de Rubeis, 1693). Copperplate engraving. © The Warburg Institute.

genealogy of the image as a vestigial index of social memory and psychic movement. At the core of Warburg's endeavor was an evident desire to explode the traditional categories of art-historical research: particularities of dates, geography, medium, and style would be dissolved into a historical psychology of symbolic thinking. Of the over sixty boards used for the atlas, one in particular crystallizes Warburg's homemade concept of the *Pathosformel*, or "pathos formula," which he defined somewhat enigmatically as the "physiognomic limits at the moment of the highest excitement (*pathos*) or the deepest absorption (*ethos*)."¹⁵⁵ In plate 5, twenty-five pictures of various dimensions are arranged more or less vertically into four columns from which the viewer could intuit her own visual syntax (fig. 1.24). Neither systematic nor disorganized, *Mnemosyne* was meant to reveal itself through associations of memory, precisely as its namesake suggests. Most of the images in this plate are derived from Greek myth and are portrayed in a variety of media (painting, sculpture in the round, bas-relief, drawing) and art-historical periods (Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, Renaissance). Given that Warburg was chiefly interested in teasing out the expression of female pathos in this panel (e.g., terror, anger, sorrow, pain), it is perhaps unsurprising that, in addition to sculptures of the Niobids and paintings of Medea on the left, the majority of examples, particularly on the right, are funerary in nature, many of them culled from the corpus of Roman mythological sarcophagi. Among others, one can easily discern the rape of Persephone, the death

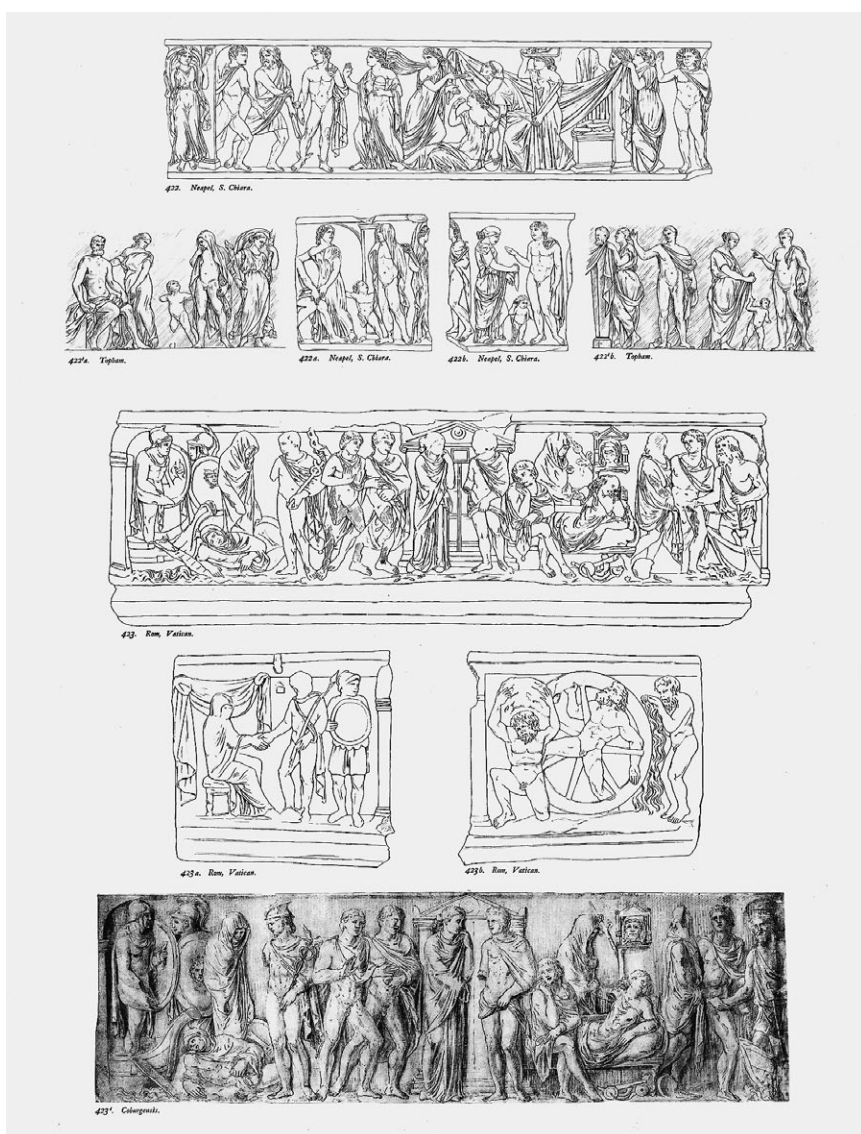


Fig. 1.23 Carl Robert, *Die Antiken Sarkophagreliefs*. III, 3, Plate CXXXII (Protesilaus).



Fig. 1.24 Aby Warburg, Mnemosyne Atlas, Plate 5. © The Warburg Institute.

of Meleager, Admetus and Alcestis and, last but not least, Protesilaus and Laodamia on the Vatican sarcophagus.

While Warburg likely selected the Protesilaus sarcophagus primarily for the emotionality expressed by Laodamia's grief and suicide, it is an example that nonetheless gives powerful form to his understanding of the *Nachleben der Antike*, the "survival" of antiquity. This concept of "survival" was borrowed from the British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, who used it in order to indicate the ways in which styles and historical forms of life in culture overlap and converge in what Didi-Huberman calls a "vertiginous play of time in the present" (a recognition that further distinguishes him from his contemporary Frazer, which takes us back to the beginning of this chapter regarding Wittgenstein's criticism of the anthropologist and narrowly historical approaches to cultural phenomena more generally).¹⁵⁶ It is thus a phantomatic history in the sense that it is anachronistically constituted in the present: one could think of it in terms of disturbed layers of archaeological strata or even an archaeological field survey where potsherds are discovered not deep within the earth, but rather scattered across its surface for anyone to see. Contrasting Winckelmann's and Warburg's ways of looking at and thinking about antiquity and its survivals, Didi-Huberman asks, "Might there not exist a time of images which is neither 'life and death' or 'greatness and decline,' nor even that ideal 'Renaissance' whose values historians constantly put to their own uses? Might there not be a time for phantoms, a return of the images, a 'survival' (*Nachleben*) that is not subject to a model of transmission presupposed by the 'imitation' (*Nachahmung*) of ancient works by more recent works?"¹⁵⁷

What we see in the Vatican sarcophagus is a grammar of ghosts that offers an ancient analogue to Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project and the Warburgian method more generally: in its somersaulting between myth and history, between the Homeric past and the "now-time" of the Roman Empire that constitutes the historical self-consciousness of the Second Sophistic, it deploys images without the help of texts to conjure up the pathos of grief and sorrow for the bereaved in a ghostly return of ceaseless deferrals.

Chapter Two

THE CHTHONIC SUBLIME

A puddle of water no deeper than a single finger-breadth, which lies between the stones on a paved street, offers us a view beneath the earth to a depth as vast as the high gaping mouth of heaven stretches above the earth, so that you seem to look down on the clouds and the heaven, and you discern bodies hidden in the sky beneath the earth, miraculously.

LUCRETIUS, *De Rerum Natura* (first century BCE)¹

. . . that a ground line which arbitrates between the factual and its false mirror image separates two absolute equivalents, like the midline of a Rorschach blot; that the hierarchy of things more or less real is not determined by degrees of tangibility: that all those things are real which fully form the content of experience.

LEO STEINBERG, "Monet's *Water Lilies*" (1956)²

Since the days of Homer and Hesiod, the Underworld—Hades (*Aidēs*)—was strictly speaking invisible, its cavernous halls engulfed in gloomy, boundless darkness where everything is black, dank, and moldering. Etymologically, as Plato and other philosophers would later comment, Hades seems to be derived from the root

*a-wid- (perhaps linking it to the Latin *videre*, “to see”), whose alpha privative designates the *in*-visible or the *un*-seen.³ Located “under the secret places of the earth,” as Homer put it and Vergil after him, Hades is the ultimate undisclosed location. It is home to ghosts that are unseen not because they are *absolutely* invisible (indeed, a recurrent feature of ghost stories in Greek and Latin literature insists on the visibility of ghosts in the presence of a lamp or even in the light of day), but rather because they are *provisionally* invisible beneath the protective casing of the earth’s crust like a body concealed under the opacity of heavy drapery.⁴ Yet for the Greeks and Romans alike, the ground had always been regarded as a kind of semipermeable membrane between the upper world and the Underworld through which the living and the dead might come into visual, even quasi-tangible, contact with one another. Ghosts sprang into view out of the earth just as easily as they disappeared back into it: in Homer, the *psychē* of Patroclus vanished underground (*kata chthonos*) like a wisp of smoke after slipping through Achilles’s fingers; in Seneca’s *Octavia*, the ghost of Agrippina escapes from Tartarus by “bursting through the earth” (*tellure rupta*).⁵ Even in the day-to-day care and feeding of the dead, libations were poured into shallow trenches or else into terracotta tubes at the gravesite that fed into buried vessels containing the cremated remains below—a veritable pipeline to the deceased who, although unseen, greedily imbibed the liquid that drained away somewhere underfoot.⁶

But what about those intrepid souls who endeavored to make the perilous journey downward? What, or rather *how*, did Orpheus, Odysseus, or Aeneas see what he saw in the chthonic abyss? Given the sheer depth and detail of some of the fantastical sights that they took in—ghosts of deceased relatives and friends, monstrous creatures, sweeping vistas of a vast hellscape honeycombed with yawning fissures and expansive caverns—the question of how exactly it is they were able to see any of this in the putative darkness of the Underworld might seem either niggling, academic, or else beside the point. Yet this was precisely the sort of question that animated Lucian of Samosata—famously dubbed the “Voltaire of antiquity” by Thomas Carlyle—in his half-facetious and quasi-ethnographic diatribe on the funeral customs of his day in the Romanized Greek East:

The general herd, whom philosophers call the laity, trust Homer and Hesiod and the other myth-makers in these matters, and take their poetry for a law unto themselves. So they suppose that there is a place deep under the earth called Hades, which is large and roomy and murky and sunless; I don’t know how they imagine it to be lighted up so that everything in it can be seen.⁷

Lucian’s characteristically droll observation about the logically inconsistent visibility of Hades and its denizens partakes of the trope of poetic fundamentalism

even as it pertains to a broader sociology of knowledge. It does so, however, with an arch self-consciousness, given that his many dialogic satires were replete with mythological protagonists who embody and populate the world of classical Greek culture and its educative value in the Second Sophistic. Indeed, the weird visibility of Hades proved to be something of a leitmotif for Lucian, who explored the theme over and again in various texts. In his *Lover of Lies*, a satirical dialogue among philosophical typecasts on the credibility of testimony about ghostly phenomena, Lucian partakes of the same sorts of contrivances as the poets he lampoons. Most significant for present purposes is the account offered by Eucrates, the host of the party, who describes a run-in with Hecate—the goddess associated with ghosts, magic, and all things nocturnal—in which he caught a glimpse of the Underworld and lived to tell the tale:

Hecate stamped on the ground with her snake foot and created a chasm, as deep as Tartarus. Presently, she jumped into it and was gone. I steeled myself and bent over it, taking hold of a tree that was growing near the hole, in case I got vertigo and fell into it headlong. Then I saw everything in Hades, Pyriphlegethon, the lake, Cerberus, and the dead, whom I could see so clearly that I even recognized some of them. I got a good view of my father, still dressed in the clothes in which we had buried him. . . . As soon as I had seen everything to my satisfaction, the chasm came together and closed itself.⁸

The essential point here is that Eucrates does not actually need to be in Hades (i.e., on the other side of the chasm) and plumb its depths in order to see everything to his satisfaction, even if this dizzying, vertiginous view runs the risk of a terrifying plunge into the hellish abyss. Here as elsewhere, Lucian focuses not so much on strategies of rendering the invisible visible, but rather the concomitant understanding of how the visible always already includes a blind spot, or an effect of invisibility.⁹ It is this topsy-turvy inversion of the visual field—what Maurice Merleau-Ponty might have called its *reversibility*—that destabilizes one's perspective by generating new ones that at once complement and confound it.¹⁰

An unprovenanced floor mosaic depicting Orpheus and Eurydice in the Underworld offers a concrete example of how the kind of experience that Lucian describes could be conjured up in the built environment (plate 2.1).¹¹ Given the nature of the Underworld imagery (which, on stylistic grounds, seems datable to the early third century), it seems plausible that the mosaic belonged to the funereal context of a sepulchral chamber. The pictorial field, framed by a guilloche pattern, is rectangular with two small extensions on either side. The preservation of the frame enclosing the various figures, the style of which suggests a date of perhaps the early third century, indicates that the mosaic belonged to a room of roughly the same shape (the

dimensions of the mosaic are 4.2 x 2.8 meters). Crowning the entire composition are the figures of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus has already emerged from the Underworld, making his way farther up the path, indicated by an iterated ground-line. Two trees, smaller in scale than a third shown below, offer a suggestion of receding space in the picture plane. Eurydice appears under an arched gate at the very threshold of the Underworld. As evidenced not only by the turn of Orpheus's head and indeed the rotation of his whole body, but also by the two individual tesserae depicting his pupils and their forbidden gaze, the plight of the lovers has been pictured at precisely the moment of Orpheus's ineluctable failure and Eurydice's second death. Charon appears to steer his skiff toward her, most likely to ferry her back over the Stygian waters. In the extension to the left, one of the Danaids fills up a bottomless *pithos* with water, while the three-headed Cerberus guards the threshold of Hades in the corresponding extension on the right. In the middle-left zone of the mosaic, Tantalus stands underneath a tree, submerged up to his knees in water, yet unable to reach the glittering water to slake his thirst. Finally, Ixion, himself no stranger to unrelenting punishment, watches the spectacle unfold from the dizzying view of the wheel on which he had been damned to spin for all eternity. I shall return to this mosaic at the end of this chapter, but for now it is enough to point out the way in which Orpheus's gaze foregrounds a complex dynamic that toggles between seeing and not-seeing, visibility and invisibility, at the very threshold of the upper world—*telluris margine summae*, as Ovid says in the *Metamorphoses*.¹²

This chapter is about the paradoxical visibility of Hades. More specifically, it concerns the broader implications for positioning the Underworld as a site of knowledge and aesthetic experience. My basic claim is that ancient attempts to conceptualize, depict, and even construct the spaces of the Underworld, particularly in the cramped space of the tomb, were achieved by establishing the limits of the field of vision itself—limits that were constituted reflexively by their capacity to be exceeded or transgressed. The argument develops along three interrelated lines of inquiry. The first is twofold: I consider how the kind of vertiginous view of Hades that Lucian describes above relates to the aesthetics of the sublime in antiquity, particularly in James I. Porter's recent characterization of this aesthetic concept as a mind-shattering clash of scale and perspective between, for example, immeasurable heights and abyssal depths; I then suggest some structural affinities between this concept of the sublime and that of *chorographia*, or "regional cartography," that was linked to artistic practices such as landscape painting and broader concerns of imaging space in a relational and comparative fashion.¹³ The second builds on these concerns to engage the problem of pictorial perspective: beginning not with a sepulchral context, but rather with the famous Odyssey frieze from the Esquiline that features landscape scenes of Hades, I explore how certain formal elements—for example, groundlines, registers, and faceted planes of sculpted relief in related

examples—effectively diagram the metaphysical relations between the Underworld and the upper world at critical, destabilizing moments when the earth opens up to offer a vertiginous glimpse of its own, convulsing guts. And third, the complex phenomenology of tomb space: how the geometrical-optical coordination of real and depicted space in the sepulchral chamber virtualized the journey to the Underworld for the deceased and bereaved alike. Whereas the previous chapter was chiefly concerned with the conditions of pictoriality and the recursive manner in which ghosts were depicted *as* and *through* pictures, the present chapter offers a corresponding treatment of the conditions of visibility.

UNDERWORLD CHOROGRAPHY

In his wide-ranging study of the sublime in classical antiquity—an aesthetic concept he insists is “no one thing” reducible to any one author (not even Longinus’s first-century treatise *Peri Hupsos*, “On the Sublime”) or form of experience (unlike modern accounts of the sublime that tend to emphasize its extraordinariness)—Porter has usefully identified one of the manifold experiences of the sublime as “interstitial” that pertains to an interval that disrupts and destabilizes the hierarchical structure and continuity of the cosmos.¹⁴ “The unifying thread” of such examples of the interstitial sublime, he asserts, “is the simple fact of a *gap*, or *void*, or an *absence*—a blank space and discontinuity that *interrupts* representation, threatening the very possibility of representation and even of imagination itself.”¹⁵ Not coincidentally, it was precisely this architectonic friction between the upper world and the Underworld that captured Longinus’s interest in what he calls Homer’s use of a “cosmic interval” (*kosmikō diastēmati*) to account for the immeasurable stride of the gods. For Longinus, quoting Homer, the sublimity of the cosmic interval is produced by the action of Poseidon, who “shook the boundless earth and towering heads of the mountains” so that even the non-interventionist god of the Underworld had to stand up and take notice, terrified that his own halls might come crashing down on him:

Aidoneus, lord of the dead below, was in terror
And sprang from his throne and screamed aloud, for fear that above him
He who circles the land, Poseidon, might break the earth open
And the houses of the dead lie open to men and immortals
Ghastly and moldering, so the very gods shudder before them.¹⁶

Commenting on this passage, Longinus remarks to the unnamed interlocutor, “You see, friend, how the earth is split to its foundations, hell itself laid bare, the whole

universe sundered and turned upside down; and meanwhile everything, heaven and hell, mortal and immortal alike, shares in the conflict and danger of that battle.”¹⁷ Even if Homer doesn’t actually say that the realm of Hades crumbles and falls, Longinus is clearly enthralled with the delicious suggestion that it *could* be stripped naked (*gumnoumenou*) and divested of its protective covering of earth that conceals it from the gaze of mortals and immortals alike.

Longinus’s apocalyptic fervor may equally well have been stirred by Roman writers of the early imperial period who took up the trope and pushed it even further. The opening of Seneca’s *Trojan Women*, for example, is a tour de force of the interstitial sublime. Talthybius, explaining to the chorus why the Greek ships have been delayed on their journey home, reports that supernatural events are to blame—events that he doubly swears he saw with his own eyes (*vidi ipse, vidi*, he says): “the earth shook with a muffled roar and heaved all of its inner recesses from the lowest depths. The treetops swayed; lofty woodland and sacred grove thundered with an awesome sound of breaking. . . . Then a newly opened chasm revealed measureless hollows, and the gaping maw of Erebus (etymologically linked to concepts of depth and darkness) gave passage to the world above through the fractured earth, and eased the tomb’s weight.”¹⁸ All of these reversals of geological and celestial spaces—contents vomited from the inner recesses (*sinus*) of the earth up to the lofty (*excelsum*) treetops, measureless caverns (*immensos specus*), and the very threshold or gap (*hiatus*) of the Underworld itself—all of this sets the stage for the shade (*umbra*) of Achilles to spring forth (*emicuit*, Talthybius says, using a verb that typically refers to the shapeless matter of fire or blood) from the chasm like molten lava ejaculating from the fissure system of an active volcano (itself a favorite *topos* of the sublime).¹⁹

In his late antique commentary on the *Thebaid* of Statius, Lactantius Placidus touched upon a similar set of sublime elements in the first-century poet’s eerily lush and vivid description of Mercury and the shade of Laius departing from the Underworld. Rather than describing how they perceived the deathly landscape around them, Statius reverses perspectives so that it is the landscape *itself* that constrains, observes, and wonders at both the god and the king on the arduous journey upward: “the barren groves and ghost-haunted fields and forest of somber hue stand amazed, and Earth herself marvels to have opened rearwards.”²⁰ After making their way through the gauntlet of ghostly terrors and over the threshold where the hellhound Cerberus keeps his watch, Statius evocatively describes Mercury bursting up into the upper world (*ad superos*): as if emerging from a mine shaft, the swift god appears “enveloped in dusky shadow (*obsitus umbra*)” and inhales deep breaths of clean, fresh air before shaking off “the subterranean mists (*infernaque nubila vultu discutit*)” from his divine visage.²¹

For Lactantius, however, it wasn't so much the sublimity of Statius's poetry that captured his attention as the poetics of place and space and their relation to the corresponding world of lived experience. "There is a place (*Est locus*)," Statius says, "that the peoples of Inachus call Taenarus . . ." Commenting on this phrase, the scholiast remarks: "This is called *topothesia*, that is, a place that is made up according to poetic license. For in a description of this kind, one calls it *topographia* when the appearance of a real place is given and *topothesia* when it is made up."²² Significantly, however, Lactantius Placidus does not stop with the distinction between *topographia* and *topothesia*. With regard to the fuller context of the poetic description of Taenarus that Statius more specifically locates as the harbor of Malea—a promontory of the Peloponnese that was infamous for its perilous rocks indicated only by whitecaps of seething foam—Lactantius identifies an instance of what he calls *chorographia*. Noting the fact that Taenarus is located in Laconia, but that it is also said to be one of the entrances to the Underworld, it seems to be the *mixed* status of this place as both a local reality on the one hand and a poetic fiction on the other that constitutes its "chorographic" dimension. There is much to suggest a conceptual and aesthetic affinity between the sublime and chorography, and it is telling that Lactantius chooses a passage that traffics in so many tropes of the former in order to define the latter. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. What exactly *is* chorography?

Using Lactantius's commentary as a starting point, Eugenio La Rocca has argued that all three of these terms—*topothesia*, *topographia*, *chorographia*—correspond to both rhetorical and cartographic techniques of defining place and space that can be handily translated into the domain of Roman painting (and by extension, as I shall discuss later on, the similarly flat but optically and axially rotated medium of floor mosaic).²³ For La Rocca, the rationale for this commensurability can be inferred from a well-known passage from Claudius Ptolemy's treatise on geography, written in the second century CE:

World cartography (*geōgraphia*) is an imitation through drawing of the entire known part of the world (i.e., the *oikoumene*) together with the things that are, broadly speaking, connected with it. It differs from regional cartography (*chōrographia*) in that regional cartography, as an independent discipline, sets out the individual localities, each one independently and by itself registering practically everything down to the last thing therein (for example, harbors, towns, districts, branches of principal rivers, and so on), while the essence of world cartography is to show the known world as a single and continuous entity, its nature and how it is situated, [taking account] only of the things that are associated with it in its broader, general outlines (such as gulfs, great cities, the more notable peoples and rivers, and the more noteworthy things of each kind).²⁴

Ptolemy goes on to define *chōrographia* more specifically as an essentially artistic practice that zooms in and out between the general and the particular. It concerns itself with qualities, not quantities, and it is for this very reason that Ptolemy explicitly mentions that “regional cartography (*chōrographia*) requires landscape drawing, and no one *but* a man skilled in drawing would do regional cartography.”²⁵ This is all in contrast, he says, to the requirements of world cartography (*geōgraphia*), which demand simply that the most salient features be visualized “purely by means of lines and labels.”²⁶ Geography is the product of mathematical rationalization; chorography, that of artful description.

Useful as these Greek terms might appear at first glance, the rigidly binary distinctions they present—real/fictive, general/particular—demand closer scrutiny against a wider range of testimony that suggests a more fluid and flexible range of interpretation. With regard to the first pair, La Rocca acknowledges that *topothesia* may take on the look of *topographia* in order to confer a kind of informational specificity to subjects of fantasy such as sacral-idyllic or mythological landscapes that otherwise appear to reside in an altogether separate spatio-temporal dimension.²⁷ As for the second pair, he follows most other scholars in situating chorography on a sort of hazy spectrum falling somewhere between topography and geography.

In many ways, Ptolemy’s distinction between geography and chorography (similarly cast in binary terms as either global/regional, mathematical/artistic) has come to dominate and monopolize the modern understanding of ancient views on the matter.²⁸ As Jesse Simon has persuasively argued, it is mainly because Ptolemy was the only thinker who explicitly *defined* chorography in antiquity that his own views have loomed large at the expense of competing claims that have been suppressed or subordinated to the narrower focus of his intellectual project and its terminological apparatus.²⁹ Strabo, for example, appears to use the terms for geography and chorography in a more or less interchangeable way (he even refers to his own project as a chorography, despite the fact that the title of the text is *Geography*), at times even making it unclear whether he is talking about a textual description or a pictorial artifact.³⁰ Vitruvius goes so far as to say that chorography can take the entire world as its object of research. In an especially intriguing passage about rainwater and its collection under the earth and subsequent reabsorption into the atmosphere, he substantiates his claim that rivers can travel invisibly underground and reemerge elsewhere by noting that “A proof of this is found in the sources of rivers, as they are painted on maps of the world (*orbe terrarum chorographiis picta*), and as they are described.”³¹ The word that Vitruvius uses here is *chorographia* (directly borrowed from the Greek), and in contrast to the way that Ptolemy would use it over a century later, it is applied to a project with explicitly *global* ambitions, what Simon usefully calls “world chorography.”

Questions of evidence differentiate these Vitruvian and Ptolemaic ways of seeing

the world. For Vitruvius, the chorographic view of the world, perhaps a reference to the famous (lost) “map” of Agrippa in the Porticus Vispania in Rome, counts as a crucial piece of visual evidence (*testimonio*). Intriguingly, the evidentiary status of Agrippa’s map was explicitly called into question by Pliny, who took issue with the measurements for a region in Spain—a glaring mistake, he admits, given the care and diligence to which Agrippa had applied his mind in his intention “to set before the eyes of Rome a survey of the world (*orbem terrarum urbi spectandum*).”³² The whole point of Agrippa’s map was that it purported to represent the known world not through abstract geometry, but rather through a wealth of salient features—rivers, mountains, cities, and the like—that were drawn from recorded experience.

The accuracy of such a representation was determined chiefly by the weight of authority, not the exclusive compilation of scientific measurements, but it was broadly considered to be no less “true” or objective for all that.³³ Ptolemy’s later objection to such a view derived from aggregate data was that it privileged those parts of the world we know more about (i.e., from which we have more data or local information to plug into the big picture), thus encouraging cartographers to represent Europe as having a larger land mass than Asia, even if this isn’t or wasn’t known to be the case. Better, he said, to stick with the mathematical, geographical view for such an undertaking in order to mitigate the distortions that an abundance of description would inevitably introduce into the system. All the same, as Simon plausibly suggests, it may well be the case that Ptolemy’s criticisms of chorography were largely reactionary and out of step with the broader intellectual consensus of his own time.³⁴

It is important to underscore the extent to which the epistemological import of “world chorography” is contingent on the potentially ambivalent understanding of its etymology.³⁵ The difficulty arises chiefly from the fact that *chōrographia* in Greek may derive from two closely related words with rather different connotations. On the one hand, it may come from *chōros*, which corresponds neither to some specific place (*topos*) nor to some geographical or cosmic scale, but rather at some indeterminate zone in between these two extremes. On the other, it may come from *chōra*, which has a generally nonpolitical designation of “land,” “place,” “space,” or, more philosophically, even a “receptacle.”³⁶ If we suspend the latter for a moment, then the question of boundaries comes to the fore. As Simon writes, “the defining characteristic of *chōros* . . . seems to be its limits. The word appears most often in classical sources to describe a space which is finite and bounded, land which need not necessarily be perceived in a single glance, but whose extent is nevertheless known.”³⁷ The stakes of such an empirical approach to “world chorography” with specific reference to Agrippa’s map clearly have important implications for Augustan ideology and, as Claude Nicolet has shown, for the geopolitical effects of early imperial expansion that in turn generated the conditions of possibility for a “world

chorography” to be a conceivable project in the first place.³⁸ Indeed, it is precisely against this imperializing grid of geography and power that the essentially “cartographic” aspects of Aeneas’s adventures through the infernal *regiones* in *Aeneid* 6 must be understood.³⁹

These conceptual links between geography, power, and the Underworld seem to have enjoyed an afterlife in later imperial times during the Second Sophistic. For example, as the author of the *Historia Augusta* writes in a well-known passage, Hadrian’s “villa at Tibur was marvelously constructed, and he actually gave to parts of it the names of provinces and places of the greatest renown, calling them, for instance, Lyceum, Academia, Prytaneum, Canopus, Poikile and Tempe. And in order not to omit anything, he even made a Hades.”⁴⁰ Although archaeologists have long searched in vain for the Hades at Hadrian’s villa, where features such as vaulted passageways or cryptoporticos have been offered up from time to time as tantalizing but ultimately inconclusive evidence, it is nonetheless reasonable to think that Hadrian’s souvenir Underworld might have some basis in fact. Indeed, it is tempting to consider that it might have been constructed using his own designs, given his famous enthusiasm and experience as a practicing architect. Moreover, it was well known that Hadrian was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, most likely during his visit to Athens in 124/125, suggesting that his interest in the Underworld fit together alongside his other provincial wanderings in an elaborate *periegesis*, or sophisticated travelogue, in monumental form.⁴¹ Thus even the infernal regions of Hades had been annexed into the limits of empire and the lavish microcosm of its famously philhellene sovereign.

The empirical approach to surveying the “limits” of the known world need not be restricted to the merely visible surface of the earth. As a corollary to “world chorography,” therefore, we might posit the contours of an “Underworld chorography” that charts its hidden depths through a combination of empirical observation and inference. Without particular reference to the ancient concept of chorography, a stimulating body of recent work has explored ancient observations and attitudes toward what modern hydrogeological science categorizes as “karst” terrain, or a landscape created by the dissolution of soluble rock such as limestone that drains underground, producing deep chasms and intricate cave systems.⁴² Broadly speaking, the goal of this work has been to study the material conditions of possibility for ancient belief in the Underworld and its local environment. Such an approach runs the risk of generating somewhat mechanistic and functionalist explanations for complicated cultural and psychological phenomena, although it does have the salutary upshot of highlighting the significance of observational experience and inferential modes of reasoning.

We have already seen how Vitruvius’s appeal to a chorographic depiction of the world served as the basis of his testimony with regard to the existence of subterra-

nean rivers—a theory that stretches all the way back to the Presocratics. On this point, it is essential to observe that Vitruvius never actually says that the underground rivers themselves are shown on the map, but only that their *sources* (*capita*) are depicted, that is to say, at the point where the invisible river suddenly reemerges on the surface and becomes visible once again. One can still derive knowledge about these rivers (and, more importantly, prove that it is in fact one and the same river) even if they are, like the drainage pipes for libations I mentioned at the start of this chapter, strictly speaking unseen. Both Strabo and Pausanias furnish such a proof in their mention of the fact that certain objects like cups have been thrown into one part of a river only to be found again farther downstream.⁴³

In a style of reasoning that typifies the culture of learning in the Second Sophistic, Pausanias even goes so far as to suggest that careful study of the contemporary landscape *itself* bears the potential to reveal or access the Homeric vision of the heroic past in the lived present: “Near Cichyrus is a lake called Acherusia, and a river called Acheron. There is also Cocytus, a most unlovely stream. I believe it was because Homer had seen these places that he made bold to describe in his poems the regions of Hades, and gave to the rivers there the names of those in Thesprotia.”⁴⁴ Pausanias shows how the lived experience of an embodied observer may collapse the distinction between an actual, historical terrain and the mythological landscape fashioned by Homer’s poetic license. Looking upon the same land that Homer blindly “saw” thus reveals the circularity of the reasoning by which the visible lands of Greece become the invisible regions of Hades—and vice versa. Using Lactantius Placidus’s terminology, one could say that *topographia* models *topothesia*, but that it is *topothesia* that helps one see the *topographia* in a new way. *Chorographia*, I suggest, designates this relay and the newfound vision it affords.

At last we are in a position to discern the potential affinities between chorography and the sublime. With its unique combination of visual experience and non-visual inference, chorography—being stipulatively *unmathematical* in its conception and visualization (at least according to its Ptolemaic definitions)—delimits precisely the kind of aggregate, heterogeneous, and unsystematic relationship between bodies and space in modern accounts of ancient pictorial perspective, as we shall see in the next section. If on the one hand what you were looking for was a *mimesis* of the world, a more or less accurate “imitation” of it, as Ptolemy says at the beginning of his treatise, then geography and its claims to mathematical scientificity were the most appropriate tool for the task at hand. What chorography, like the sublime, had on offer was instead a kind of telescoping, vertiginous dynamic that shuttles between the binary relations of heights *and* depths; the maximally distant *and* the maximally close-up views; gross generality *and* fetishistic specificity.

At first blush, chorography and the sublime might seem like strange bedfellows. This may, however, be a symptom of modern prejudices, rather than of in-

consistencies that would render them mutually exclusive in ancient patterns of thought. According to Kant's influential definition, the sublime stands in opposition to the beautiful by virtue of its representation of limitlessness, rather than bounded form.⁴⁵ Likewise, it grasps after an indeterminate quantity, rather than a known quality (hence it is the relational datum of *scale* that matters). On this view, which bears a strong family resemblance to ancient concepts of the sublime, one might be tempted to say that geography, given that it concerns itself principally with quantities (at least according to its Ptolemaic definitions), might correspond better to the sublime than chorography, which concerns itself with qualities (again according to its Ptolemaic definitions). Rather, I want to insist on the productive ambiguity of chorography's etymology with respect to its application across a range of discursive practices. Indeed, it may even be that it is the very *promiscuity* of chorography as a concept that allows it to travel between zones of unbounded vastness and localized specificity.

While modern, romanticizing concepts of the sublime tend to emphasize or privilege the terror or gobsmacked experience induced by the sight of heavenly heights and their infinite expanse, Porter has demonstrated how the ancients routinely located the grandeur of the sublime not only in the starry heights and cavernous depths—in chasms, volcanoes, and the like—but also, and paradoxically, in both directions at once. “The point,” Porter asserts, “is not simply that extreme depths can be as sublime as extreme heights, or that sublimity is a truly bipolar event (which it is). It is that in the tradition that Longinus represents, sublimity is a matter of relationship and perspective, not an absolute. No property is in and of itself ‘sublime’: it must be made to seem so through a contrasting view, or rather through an irreconcilable clash of available views.”⁴⁶ Experiences such as these are measured against their absence or negation such that they produce in the beholder a paradoxical “sense of depths in heights or of heights in depths.”

At this point it is useful to return to Lucian, for whom such disorienting perspectives, as we have already seen, constitute a recurring motif of his satires. Perhaps the most important of these, although it remains understudied, is his *Charon, or the Inspectors*, which seems especially apposite for present purposes as it brings together the thematics of the Underworld, chorography, and the sublime. The opening premise of the text is that Charon, the ferryman of souls across the Stygian waters of the Underworld, has been granted shore leave to visit the upper world for a single day like Protesilaus. Confronted by Hermes, who has forged a strong bond of friendship with Charon in his capacity as the conductor of souls to the Underworld, Charon expresses a desire to see what men are like and asks Hermes to take him around and show him everything down to the last detail (*deixeis hēkasta*). Hermes tells Charon that he doesn't have the time to spare, as he has more pressing errands to run for Zeus. Charon begs Hermes to be his guide (*periēgēsai*) anyway,

saying that if he goes back to Hades without seeing what life is like for men, he'll be "no better off than the blind, for they stumble and reel about in the darkness, while I, to the contrary, am dazed in the light."⁴⁷ Feeling pity for Charon, Hermes agrees but asserts that "For you to see everything minutely in detail (*ēkaston akribōs*) is impossible, ferryman, since it would busy us for many years" and get them in a heap of trouble with their respective supervisors, Zeus and Pluto. Thus, Hermes says, "We must manage it so that you can see the principal things (*kephalaia*) that are going on."⁴⁸ The key point here is not simply that Charon has too much to see and too little time to see it. It is rather that there seems to be no truly satisfying compromise between a viewpoint of infinitesimal particularity on the one hand and of infinitesimal generality on the other: either one only sees the forest through the trees, or else the trees are all one sees.

Nevertheless, given the time limits involved, Hermes makes the case that the big picture is the only way to go. Under "normal" circumstances, Hermes says, the view from Olympus would be the ideal spot from which to observe the pageant of human affairs in all of its particularity. But since Charon spends all his time hanging around with ghosts, Olympus is strictly off-limits. "In a word, Charon," Hermes says, "we want a high place of some sort (*hupselou tinos hemin dei chōriou*), from which you can look down upon everything."⁴⁹ The precise *location* doesn't seem to matter at all; its chief criterion is *hupsos*, loftiness. And so it is fitting that the place (*chorion*) from which they can view the whole of the inhabited earth is an aggregate and decidedly fictive *non-place*: at Hermes's suggestion, and using Homer as their guide, the two immortals begin to uproot and reassemble the tallest mountains in Greece in order to fashion a towering structure from which they obtain a better viewpoint. For his part, Charon is worried that Hermes is making the structure too slender and that it will all come crashing down like a "piece of stage-machinery (*mēchanēn*)," a reference to the precarious crane operated by pulley systems that was used to hoist gods up above the stage in Greek theater. Hermes insists that one has to be willing to take risks to see such sights, heaves Parnassus onto the top of the heap as if by magic, and notes that its twin peaks make it a perfect vantage point for the two of them to look around and inspect everything (*episkopei hapanta*).⁵⁰

Significantly, the Greek verb *episkopein* relates to a whole set of related terms—"to inspect," but also "to oversee" and "to examine"—that all converge upon a common charge of surveillance. In a different context, Catherine Connors has drawn attention to the way in which Strabo uses it with particular reference to his geographical project in order to identify the various ways in which Roman power is materialized by the functionaries who supervise the territories and infrastructure of the nascent *imperium*.⁵¹ There are strong, if anachronic, echoes in Lucian's satirical text with Michel Foucault's account of panopticism as a visually constituted

matrix of power and knowledge in which “inspection functions ceaselessly.”⁵² But the analogy is imperfect, for whereas panopticism operates by virtue of rendering the subjects under its disciplinary gaze individually and eminently visible, the ludicrous, teetering tower of mountains assembled by Hermes and Charon is constitutively unsuited to this task. Indeed, for all their hard work, Charon remains thoroughly confused and sorely disappointed; he mistakes cities for “dens” or “hiding places” and can see only “tiny little men” without any sense of the drama that is happening on the ground: “I can’t see anything plainly from on high. What I wanted was not just to look at cities and mountains as in a picture (*graphē*), but to observe men themselves, what they are doing and what they are saying.”⁵³

Although it is usually translated here as “picture,” the word that Charon uses to characterize the panoramic quality of his visual experience—*graphē*—carries ambivalent connotations with both writing and drawing, the latter of which is also strongly associated with maps and their linear forms of representation. Recall that Ptolemy, at the very beginning of his treatise on geography, defines his subject as an “imitation through drawing (*mimesis . . . dia graphēs*).” Indeed, Lucian’s entire text can profitably be regarded as an elaborate, if ludic, commentary on the epistemological basis of geography and its local limits. Charon, we might say, wants to trade in the gaze of the geographer for the gaze of the ethnographer. After voicing his displeasure, Charon announces that he’ll descend “little by little” until he reaches a happy medium where he can “see and hear better” without sacrificing the scope of the human drama below—a place, I suggest, that approximates the chorographic viewpoint situated between its geographic and topographic counterparts.

Hermes tells him to hold still for a moment, explaining that such transporting visions can be obtained by simpler means, namely by reciting a few lines from Homer. The invocation of Homer signals more than mere erudition, moving us rather obliquely into the discursive realm of geography. While Eratosthenes had famously demoted Homer’s poetry to the status of entertainment, rather than instruction, it was Strabo who sought to rehabilitate the poet as “the founder of the science of geography.”⁵⁴ In Lucian’s fanciful tale, Homer’s poetry literally has the power to move mountains, for it is by reciting his verses that Hermes and Charon constructed their tower like so many speech-acts. “When I say the verses,” Hermes says, “remember not to be short-sighted any longer, but to see everything distinctly.”⁵⁵ The verses he recites are those in the fifth book of the *Iliad*, in which Athena bestows Diomedes with superhuman sight that helps him recognize gods disguised as mere mortals. And just like that, Charon is able to perceive both the full sweep of human affairs and the particular trials of various individuals.

The net effect of this poetically gifted vision is at once sublime and chorographic: Charon is able to perceive the totality of human life in all of its various and sundry detail. But it is not only the simultaneous apprehension of the general

and the particular that endows Charon with a feeling of sublimity: it is the total otherness of his perspective as a dweller of Hades measured against the total otherness of his perspective up in the outer edges of the firmament that registers a mind-boggling sensation of spatial dislocation and indeterminacy. Charon slowly comes to see what death looks like not only in the world below, with which he is well acquainted, but also from up above. He asks Hermes to show him various cities such as Mycenae and Troy that he has heard so much about from his ghostly passengers, only to learn the melancholy and marvelous truth from Hermes that “cities die as well as men, ferryman, and, what is more (*paradoxotaton*), even whole rivers.”⁵⁶

But perhaps the greatest irony is that Charon fails to recognize what graves and tombs look like, having only met the shades of men in Hades but never having seen the receptacles for their earthbound bodies. He then learns about their funeral rites, and how men pour wine and mead into trenches (specifically a *bothron*, or sacrificial pit) that are believed to be consumed by the ghosts of the dead. Scoffing at such foolhardiness, he exclaims that men “do not know what an impassable frontier (*hēlikois horois*) divides (*diakēkritai*) the world of the dead from the world of the living.”⁵⁷ By comparing the contours of a modest sacrificial pit for funerary libations with the most distant and impenetrable boundary in the visible landscape, Charon leads us to see something about the very small (the hypo-topographical view) by way of the very large (the hyper-geographical view) by simultaneously miniaturizing *and* blowing it up—on a scale that is at once incommensurate with the evidence of one’s eyes and comprehensible through inferential modes of reasoning. Here as elsewhere, Lucian’s language is pregnant with allusions to imperial geopolitics, but once again such a reading is predicated on the aesthetics of the sublime through a shift of perspective and a “logic of the gap” that separates a beholder from the objects (or subjects) of his or her vision.⁵⁸

Having established the primacy of perspective as an operative force in the aesthetics of chorography and the sublime alike, the next section explores some concrete examples of pictorial perspective—the sort of *graphē* against which Charon compares his own experience. My intention here is not to position these examples as merely symptomatic of the discursive objects treated up to this point, but rather to show how they were constitutive elements of a shared visual culture.

TO HELL WITH PERSPECTIVE

The paradoxical visibility of Hades and its epistemological status has played a crucial, if appropriately subterranean, role in the ancient genre of landscape painting and its historiography. Since the nineteenth century, the study of ancient Greek and Roman painting has largely been founded on the basis of two examples whose tech-

nical innovations and subsequent discovery and reception have earned them a celebrated status in the genre. The most famous (largely because they are actually extant) are the so-called “Odyssey landscapes” excavated in a mid-first-century BCE building on the Via Graziosa on the Esquiline in Rome in 1848.⁵⁹ The other, although chronologically prior, example is a lost mid-fifth-century fresco cycle depicting the *Iliupersis* (Sack of Troy) and the *Nekyia* (Hermes’s colloquy with the ghosts of the Underworld) by the Greek painter Polygnotus. Thanks to Pausanias’s detailed description of Polygnotus’s frescoes in his travelogue, written during the Roman era, the vanished paintings have spurred generations of scholars and artists alike to reconstruct their original appearance with a sophisticated mixture of philological and art-historical methodologies.⁶⁰ According to different sets of criteria, each of these paintings has served as a decisive fulcrum for various arguments about the historical developments in concepts of space, place, and perspective in ancient painting. Yet, despite their vaunted status and the copious ink that has been spilled on securing them, it remains a curious and curiously overlooked fact that the two most famous landscape paintings of the classical world take up not only the wanderings of Odysseus, but also his experiences in the Underworld, as a major theme of the work.⁶¹

Stipulatively, any discussion of “landscape” as a genre of ancient Greek and Roman painting finds itself in the position of having to qualify or distinguish itself from the historical specificity of the genre in the early modern era.⁶² In the traditional, art-historical sense of the term, landscape painting generally involves a panoramic view in which human figures are subordinated to the elements of nature as configured within the larger economy of the pictorial field. This sort of landscape painting, as the story goes, does not take proper shape until the Renaissance with the emergence of a systematized form of perspectival space. Whatever their achievements, neither the Greeks nor the Romans produced a picture quite like the Dutch landscapes of Jacob van Ruisdael, for example. So, what *did* they have? On the early side of things, as Nikolaus Dietrich has shown, the iconography of Greek vase-painting of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE evinces an interest in the strategic deployment of landscape elements such as plants and rocks in a strictly relational or situational form of engagement with human figures.⁶³ In other words, the iconography of plants and rocks does not itself establish an ambient space that envelops the human figures; it is rather the human figures that create and determine the spatial context of their appearance. Building on Meyer Schapiro’s foundational insights into the semiotic constructions of “field and vehicle” (i.e., the pictorial field and the material support of an image), Dietrich shows how the early Greek vase-painter established the pictorial field wherein the space of the depicted action is dialectically engaged with the virtual space embodied by the surface of the vase itself.⁶⁴

Immediately upon their discovery, the Esquiline frescoes depicting the wander-

ings of Odysseus were hailed as a watershed in the history of Greco-Roman painting. Instead of being subordinated to the natural elements of the depicted scene, as had been the case for centuries in earlier Greek painting, the figures are now reduced and enveloped by the natural elements that frame the action that takes place within (plate 2.2). With their wispy trees, crags and cliffs, dispersed and diminutive figures, and horizons engulfed in hazy, atmospheric mist and shadow, the frescoes bear more than a passing resemblance to modern ideas about what landscape painting is supposed to look like. Indeed, it was precisely *because* of this seemingly uncanny, anachronistic resemblance to the look of modern examples of the genre that the Odyssey landscapes have been praised as “epoch-making” and, in the words of one of the most recent commentators, “the first extant example of full-fledged landscape painting in the Western tradition.”⁶⁵ Such effusive praise was not universal, however. Ever the iconoclast, Oswald Spengler declared in his magisterial *Decline of the West* (1918) that “Even so late, the wall-paintings of Pompeii and the ‘Odyssey’ landscapes in Rome contain a *symbol*. In each case it is a *group of bodies* that is rendered—rocks, trees, or even ‘the Sea’ as a body among bodies! There is no depth, but only superposition.”

Spengler’s complaint was only a prelude to further criticisms of a different sort. Since the middle of the twentieth century, *the* defining “problem” of the Odyssey landscapes has had to do with the question of their identity: Are they Roman copies of Hellenistic originals, or are they rather to be seen as Roman inventions in their own right?⁶⁶ In large part, much of the anxiety about the “Roman-ness” both of the Odyssey landscapes and of Roman art in general has largely subsided. Yet the observations that prompted such debates remain instructive. For present purposes, the most important of these has to do with the illusionistically depicted row of red pillars that breaks up the scenes into a series of modular “panels.” Located above eye level, the conditions of their visibility have played a crucial role in their analysis, particularly with regard to the pillars that effectively operate as a framing device for the narrative action. Not unlike the marble struts that conspicuously demonstrate the ontological status of Roman marble copies *qua* copies (of Greek bronze originals, as the formula goes), the pillars have long been explained away or derided as Roman inventions that both literally and aesthetically “get in the way” of the Hellenistic original and its conceptual unity.⁶⁷ However that may be, it is significant that the red pillars are the most recognizably perspectival elements of the frescoes, with the scenes themselves showing little in the way of an internal consistency of perspective. Indeed, the question of exactly what kind of *space* the Odyssey landscapes produce, and even the question of whether they produce any space at all, was a matter of intense debate beyond the more specific interests of classical archaeologists.

Less than a decade after Spengler had denied that the Odyssey landscapes offered a genuinely spatial view, Erwin Panofsky published his classic essay “Per-

spective as Symbolic Form" (1927), in which he took up the frescoes among other examples of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art (in addition to Egyptian art) that he situated in a wide-ranging account of ancient philosophy, mathematics, religion, and science.⁶⁸ Contra Spengler, Panofsky insisted that antiquity did have perspective, even if it wasn't *our* perspective. All the same, he extended some of Spengler's arguments about the autonomy of bodies—"figures of Euclidean separateness," as Spengler had called them.⁶⁹ Panofsky's crucial intervention here was that bodies and space in ancient art do not emerge from a resolved conflict in which bodies are the clear winner, but rather that bodies and space were dialectically engaged in a zero-sum game in which one gains purchase only at the expense of the other:

Yet even the Hellenistic artistic imagination remained attached to individual objects, to such an extent that space was still perceived not as something that could embrace and dissolve the opposition between bodies and nonbodies, but only as that which remains, so to speak, between the bodies. Thus space was artistically manifested partly by simple superposition, partly by a still-unsystematic overlapping. Even where Greco-Roman art advanced to the representation of real interiors or real landscape, this enriched and expanded world was still by no means a perfectly unified world, a world where bodies and the gaps between them were only differentiations or modifications of a continuum of a higher order.⁷⁰

As evidence in support of this claim, Panofsky turned to a detail of the Underworld scenes from the Odyssey landscapes in order to show that "Even when the notion of perspective as 'seeing through' is taken seriously—for example, when we are meant to believe that we are looking through a row of columns onto a continuous landscape—the represented space remains an aggregate space; it never becomes that which modernity demands and realizes, a systematic space."⁷¹

Although he doesn't say so explicitly, it is evidently the juxtaposition of the conspicuously perspectival rendering of the columns and the hazy views beyond that generates an aggregate, rather than systematic, view of space. This results in the "paradoxical phenomenon that so long as antique art makes no attempt to represent the space between bodies, its world seems more solid and harmonious than the world represented by modern art; but as soon as space is included in the representation, above all in landscape painting, that world becomes curiously unreal and inconsistent, like a dream or a mirage."⁷² I wish to insist on the importance of the example that Panofsky enlists to support his claim. Specifically, I want to underscore the significance of the *detail* of the Underworld scenes that are reproduced in the text, and not simply the example of the Odyssey landscapes in general (plate 2.2).⁷³ What is the evidentiary status of this detail in the larger scope of his argument? And why is it that of all the many details Panofsky could have selected from the frieze,

he chose the Underworld scenes in particular?⁷⁴ Although Panofsky doesn't divulge explicit answers to these questions, I want to suggest that the reproduction of this detail is both deliberate and revealing with respect to some of the heated and long-standing debates about Polygnotus's treatment of space in the paintings at the clubhouse at Delphi. Although they are no longer extant, a brief excursus seems useful given their significance to the historiography of ancient painting, and the scholarly reception of the Odyssey landscapes in particular.

What distinguished Polygnotus's picture of the *Nekyia* was the sheer scale and scope of the undertaking. If Pausanias's description is accurate, the *Nekyia* comprised at least seventy figures alone and (on the basis of his spatial reading of the scenes from right to left) would likely have been located on the three walls of the west side of the Lesche (clubhouse) of the Knidians at Delphi, with the *Iliupersis* situated on the east side of the room and boasting an equal number of figures. Despite there being no trace of the original frescoes, the fact that the architectural context of the clubhouse has been preserved invites the plausible reconstruction of the program in terms of its scale and spatial setting (in contrast to the ekphrastic descriptions of the fictive picture gallery in Philostratus's *Imagines*, for example, which takes imaginative vision [*phantasia*] and vividness [*enargeia*] as its rhetorical aims, rather than the eyewitness testimony [*autopsia*] that is Pausanias's overarching goal).⁷⁵ Whether, as Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell suggests, the painting can be plausibly reconstructed on the basis of various prepositions in Pausanias's description that appear to indicate horizontal and vertical relations of figures is perhaps an open question.⁷⁶ More significant for now is the way in which the comparison with certain techniques of vase-painting, above all the innovative use of groundlines to occlude certain figures as though to imply or fold them into a depictive setting, has served as the true basis of these reconstructive visions.

In 1804, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe laid out the possibility of accessing these lost works not only through Pausanias's text, but also by an appeal to the adjacent medium of vase-painting:

We can visualize Polygnotus' art if we take into account vase-paintings . . . Here, the figures painted around the perimeter are sometimes on top of one another. The figures are not depicted against a real background: if one has to be painted seated, then the artist produces a rock for them to sit on; a square frame indicates the presence of a window; a dotted line denotes the earth, the surface of the ground . . . in general, whatever does not directly concern the figures themselves is dispensed with or merely implied.⁷⁷

Although Goethe's perceptive analysis tends to be viewed today more as a museum piece in the historiography on Polygnotus, I want to suggest that it invites

us to think carefully about the groundline as being more than a simple function of the syntactic order of the “prepositions, or adjectives and adverbs used like prepositions” in Pausanias’s description. Against or alongside these *verbal* indicators, which Stansbury-O’Donnell has deployed in his own reconstruction of the *Nekyia*, it may be profitable to think about the groundline in a decidedly *visual*, if “quasi-adjectival,” sense that David Summers attributes to it in a more general and prescriptive context. In Summers’s terms, this means that if a groundline is iterated (i.e., redrawn or repeated)—a depictive technique that is often found in vase-painting—it may *qualify* the place it signifies.⁷⁸ Crucially, this produces the conditions for a fundamentally ambiguous formal configuration wherein the iterated groundline may either be pictorialized *as* a groundline or as the contour of a surface in an optically receding plane. Moreover, as Summers observes, “as groundlines are multiplied a more and more complex random order is achieved in the overall field.”⁷⁹

Needless to say, given the dearth of evidence for the paintings themselves, it remains difficult, if not quite impossible, to say anything precise about the treatment of the groundlines in the *Nekyia* except in the most cautious of terms. Nevertheless, the relatively well-preserved archaeological remains of the clubhouse itself allow for at least a speculative hypothesis for the scale of the figures. Using the width of the east and west walls as a baseline (measuring 7.8 meters), scholars have derived the total height of the painting at approximately three meters above the dado, with the individual figures having a height of about one meter, a scale in keeping with the monumental proportions for which Polygnotus had achieved considerable fame both here and at Athens. While Polygnotus has generally been credited with the invention of superimposing figures on top of one another on multiple groundlines in order to suggest an optically receding space, the important fact remains that, as in the case of contemporary vase-painting, the figures do not become smaller as one moves from the lower to the uppermost regions of the picture plane, but are instead depicted on the same scale. The overall effect, as with the conventions of earlier vase-painting, is that the human figure everywhere dominates the scene. Whatever the differences between fresco and vase-painting—not least the depictive translation of the pictorial field from the curved body of a vase to the planar surface of a wall—it is this emphasis on the figure, an emphasis that is monumentalized on the imposing walls of the clubhouse, that prevails. Taken on its own terms, Polygnotus’s painting was by all accounts a resounding achievement in the history of monumental mural painting and the production of space in Greek art. And yet, as Goethe observes, we would be grievously disappointed in Polygnotus’s handling of “landscape” if judged according to modern criteria of the genre: “The paintings of the age lacked everything we so prize today: correct perspective, unity within a well-conceived composition, the balance between light and shade . . .”

With respect to the first of his criteria, namely “correct perspective,” Goethe seems to be pointing toward a more general condition that distinguishes modern conceptions of space from its imperfectly, quasi-realized versions in antiquity. Whether or not this was part of Goethe’s aim, I wish to suggest that there is something deeply significant about his choice to stake this kind of claim—one that has far-reaching and important consequences for the historical differences between ancient and modern visualities—on the example of the clubhouse at Delphi in particular. In 1804, Goethe undertook his study of the frescoes in direct response to a letter that was sent to him by the Riepenhausen brothers, who included sketches of their own reconstruction of the *Iliupersis* that were based on the description of Pausanias.⁸⁰ Theirs, however, was not the first attempt at such an undertaking using Pausanias’s text as a guide to reconstructing the Lesche. Some forty years earlier, Louis Joseph Le Lorrain had produced two engravings (complete with tables of names identifying the numbered figures above) of both the *Iliupersis* and the *Nekyia* that were published by the famous antiquarian the Comte de Caylus (fig. 2.1).⁸¹ Eschewing the perspectivism and coloristic effects of Lorrain’s sumptuous landscape, the Riepenhausen brothers opted for a neoclassical clarity in the form of line drawings in order to omit any details that were extraneous both to Pausanias’s description and to the archaeological fidelity of the task at hand (fig. 2.2). Although they at first produced only a reconstruction of the *Iliupersis*, with a version of the *Nekyia* (adopting a similarly minimal approach) not appearing until 1827, Goethe nevertheless built on the originality of their artistic contributions in order to posit a reconstruction of the *Nekyia* that would consist of three rows or “stories” (*Stockwerke*) of figures.

For Carl Robert, the preeminent classical archaeologist who published his own study and reconstruction of the *Nekyia* in 1892—the one that remains the most canonical, widely published version in current scholarship—the interventions of both Goethe and the Riepenhausen brothers were indispensable to the “scientific” understanding of Polygnotus’s work in its original ancient context (fig. 2.3).⁸² Robert’s chief improvement on the Riepenhausen *Nekyia* (as well as the other intervening scholarly reconstructions) was the further reduction of negative space, which, in what is by now a rather familiar instance of circular reasoning, he deemed anathema to the aesthetic sensibility of classical vase-painting. Whereas the Riepenhausen brothers had used negative space in order to arrange the figures into more or less discrete groups (thus tempering Goethe’s prescription for a three-tiered compositional structure), Robert introduced an almost labyrinthine proliferation of groundlines. The overall effect resembles the natural phenomenon of anastomosis, or the networked connection of ramifying, collateral channels in such natural objects as blood vessels, leaf veins, and streams. For Robert, the groundline is what introduces *place* without insisting on *space*. Thus, in a mix of praise and criticism

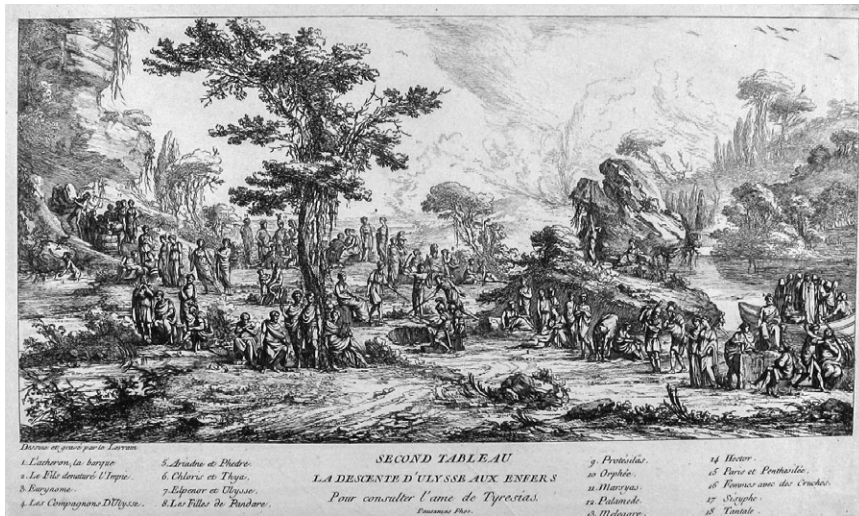


Fig. 2.1 Louis Joseph Le Lorrain, *La Descente d'Ulysse aux Enfers*. Etching. Mid-eighteenth century. 55.565.131. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Public domain.



Fig. 2.2 Franz and Josef Riepenhausen, *Reconstruction of the Nekyia*, *Peintures de Polynote à Delphes*. Dessinées et gravées d'après la description de Pausanias (Rome, 1826).

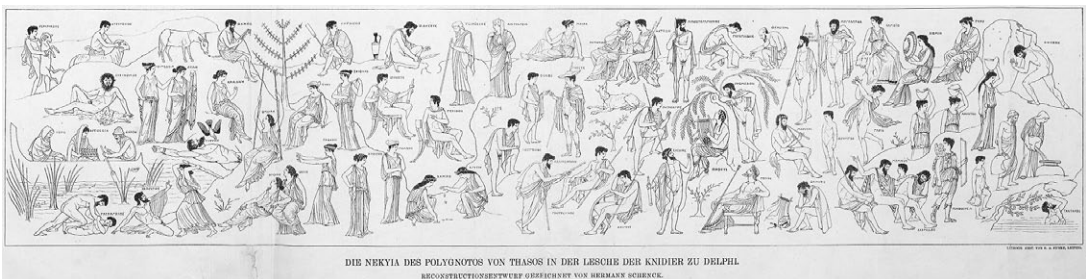


Fig. 2.3 Carl Robert, *Reconstruction of the Nekyia*, *Die Nekyia des Polygot* (Hallisches Winckelmannsprogramm 16, 1892).

for the Riepenhausen *Nekyia*, he observes that “perspective is not entirely avoided, but rather discreetly related” among the figures.⁸³

Robert’s assessment of Polygnotus’s style as being inadequately or even non-perspectival in nature would prove enormously influential and is perhaps most readily discerned in the work of Ernst Pfuhl, who shortly thereafter characterized Polygnotus’s approach as a “primitive pseudo-perspective of the vertical staggering on the surface.”⁸⁴ In a well-known apology for Polygnotus, Gerhard Rodenwaldt wrote an essay taking up the controversy over why such a renowned painter as Polygnotus didn’t paint naturalistic landscapes. For Rodenwaldt, who explicitly credited the basis of his claim to Alois Riegl’s concept of the *Kunstwollen* or “artistic will,” it wasn’t that Polygnotus *couldn’t* paint this way, but rather than he *declined* to do so: “Polykleitos could have sculpted a Borghesian fighter, Polygnotus could have painted a naturalist landscape, but they did not do so, because they would not have found them beautiful.”⁸⁵ Panofsky would later take Rodenwaldt to task for this “pseudo-psychological” explanation, arguing that Rodenwaldt had sloppily confused the conceptual distinction between ability and will: “Polygnotus did not paint a naturalist landscape not because he would have rejected it as ‘not seeming beautiful to him’ but because he could not have imagined it and could want nothing but a nonnaturalistic landscape—because of a necessity which predetermined his psychological will.”⁸⁶

Panofsky’s spirited disagreement with Rodenwaldt brings us back to the Odyssey landscapes and the question of the detail that I raised earlier. Here it is essential to recall the larger ambitions of the perspective essay. For Panofsky, pictorial perspective is a historically and philosophically capacious topic precisely because it involves a procedure that makes visible different ways of seeing. As such, it operates metaphorically as a *Weltanschauung* or “worldview” of a certain epoch or cultural context that can be discerned in or expressed from the world of depictive artifacts. Hence the Odyssey landscapes can become a diagnostic symptom, a “symbolic form,” of much weightier, profound assessments, as Panofsky proclaims toward the end of this section: “Antique perspective is thus the expression (*Ausdruck*) of a specific and fundamentally unmodern view of space (*Raumanschauung*) (although it is certainly a genuinely *spatial* view, Spengler notwithstanding). Antique perspective is furthermore the expression of an equally specific and equally unmodern conception of the world (*Weltvorstellung*).”⁸⁷ As Christopher S. Wood observes, Panofsky’s repeated emphasis on “expression” (*Ausdruck*) in this context relays his prior commitment to the impersonal force of the artistic will (i.e., the *Kunstwollen*) as it pertained to the controversy over Polygnotus’s landscapes.⁸⁸

Yet what happens if we suspend the question of artistic will and take seriously the very detail that Panofsky asserts as an exemplary, if somewhat exceptional, instance of the ancients themselves taking perspective seriously? To do so, it seems im-

perative that we take into account the discomfiting vantage point that the picture affords us, namely a view of the Underworld as seen *from the inside out*. Accordingly, the twinned concepts of “space” and “world” in Panofsky’s paradigm of perspective would seem to open up not onto a “worldview” so much as an “Underworld-view,” an *Unterweltanschauung* that confounds its normative counterpart. Indeed, a whole alternative account of pictorial perspective could be written about the marginal, if uncannily recurrent, significance of the *Unterweltanschauung*, from the Odyssey landscapes to the illusionistic ceilings of the late Quattrocento *di sotto in sù*, to the prints prepared to be seen through a lens and perspective glass in *vue d’optique* devices in the eighteenth century featuring Aeneas’s adventures in the Underworld (plate 2.3). These are lands, after all, that exist under no sunlight, as Tiresias remarked to Odysseus and Deiphobus to Aeneas after him; they are *loca turbida*, as Vergil calls them, *disordered* places.⁸⁹ When exposed to the world above, they are seen as if from the inside out. How did the ancients handle this motif of the reversibility of the visual field, and how did they use it to derive or infer the visible from the invisible, the seen from the unseen?

Rather than focusing on the entire program of the framed portico as the sole means by which to theorize how perspective operates in a general sense as “seeing through,” I wish to draw attention to the Underworld scenes in particular, beginning with the natural archway through which Odysseus enters the realm of the dead (plate 2.2). Despite the fact that this natural rock formation constitutes one of the most inventive and unusual landscape features of any of the extant panels, the archway has received very little attention in comparison to the portico frame. And yet, I would argue that the archway *itself* functions as a framing device that mirrors the more conspicuous framing device of the pillars that determines our field of vision. There exists a sort of visual chiasmus in the representational structure of the picture in the sense that we are imagined to be looking at the interior of Hades from an external point of view *at the same time* that we are presented with a sublime and chorographic view of what lies beyond it, namely the place where sea and sky meet on the distant horizon. A pair of reclining nude male figures, probably personifications of the infernal rivers Acheron and Cocytus, makes this dual perspective explicit. One of them, perhaps Acheron, reclines in the front of the picture plane while gazing out toward the sea at the arrival of Odysseus’s ship; the other, perched just inside the archway, surveys the scene of the meeting between Odysseus and the ghost of Tiresias. Perspective is thus doubly brought to bear both in the archway as frame as well as in the figures of the two rivers whose divergent gazes and positions at the threshold of the Underworld help sustain the continuous narrative.

The mere renown of this scene in the history of art and in the history of ancient landscape painting in particular tends to obscure just how strange and utterly unique this view really is. Compare its inside-out structure, for example, to the view

of Hades pictured on a grave stele set up in the first half of the third century BCE in Apollonia (fig. 2.4).⁹⁰ Intriguingly, the invisibility of the Underworld is made visible through a cross-section view that renders it like a dollhouse—a very different way of “seeing through” than a window, for example. While the type of stele is attested in several other examples in the same region, the iconography is thoroughly unique: it depicts Hermes, the figure of the deceased descending a steep flight of stairs, and the passage between the Underworld and the world above.⁹¹ In this case, however, it seems clear from the two women above—the smaller one who raises her hand to her chin in a gesture of mourning, and the larger one who reaches down toward the deceased in hopes of one last embrace—that the scene represents the irreversible descent into the Underworld rather than a miraculous ascent from it. It follows, therefore, that we find a greater cast of characters in Hades than the world above: just below Hermes, perhaps another recently deceased soul embarking on the journey to the Underworld; Charon, the ferryman of the Styx, waiting impatiently for the new arrivals; and finally, the enthroned figure of either Hades himself or perhaps one of the three judges of the Underworld who lords over a diminutive and dejected soul below, located beneath him in a recessed niche.

Complementing the rich and eclectic iconography is an architectonic structure that frames the composition. Two Corinthian columns define the limits of the horizontal expanse below on which a thin lintel forms a groundline as well as a vaulted archway representing some kind of interior structure. The presence of the two Sirens positioned atop each of the capitals, figures that served as traditional decorative elements on classical funerary monuments in the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, suggests that the stele evinces a self-reflexive quality whose differentiated zones depict the mournful encounter between the living and the dead that the stele itself brings to bear. Crucial to the effect of this conceit is the medium of relief sculpture itself and its capacity to exploit the ambiguous relations between real and depicted space.⁹² If the pictorial limits of the imagery are defined first by the lintel representing the horizontal axis of a groundline and second by the columns that establish a vertical one of walls, then the stairs issue in a third axis or dimension. They do so through a cascading line of faceted planes that stand in an increasingly oblique relation to the horizontal and vertical axes, exposing the underside of each of the steps less and less as they travel from the upper right area of the Underworld space to the lower left behind Charon’s skiff where they appear rapidly foreshortened at an almost perpendicular angle to the beholder.

The stairs effectively diagram these spatial relations in a dialectical fashion that brings the upper world and the Underworld into contact with one another at the groundline, the limit of which is mutually transgressed in the stele by means of stereotyped signifiers of marital conjugality that have been mobilized to uniquely poignant effect. First, and most obviously, there is the handclasp (*dexiosis*) between



Fig. 2.4 Funerary stele with scenes from the Underworld, ca. third century BCE. Marble. Museum of Apollonia. Photo: Manuel Cohen/Art Resource, NY.

the deceased husband and his wife; its position directly over the groundline or boundary between life and death symbolically attests to and performs the affective situation of longing and attachment beyond the grave.⁹³ Second, but almost more evocative because of its subtlety, is the small swathe of the wife's chiton that drapes just over the edge of the groundline. Its intrusion into the Underworld is a moving counterpoint to the handclasp, demonstrating that the connection between husband and wife, however fleetingly, is maintained both ways.

Whereas the cross-section view of the Apollonia stele renders the Underworld eminently visible, illuminating it so that everything below can be seen in the kind of sweeping panorama to which Lucian would later allude, the *Odyssey* landscapes probe the limit conditions of visibility by delighting in the play of illumination itself. Technical analysis of the painting has revealed that one of the most striking aspects of this scene—the ghostly white light blanketing the figures on the right—is in actuality an artifact of nineteenth-century restoration (layers of varnish were also added at this time, creating a more somber effect than the painting would originally have shown).⁹⁴ Original to the painting, however, is the faint light that illuminates the space just inside the archway and makes the narrative action visible. The play of light and shadow disturbs any simple distinction between the visibility and invisibility, producing an effect that bears certain resonances with the aesthetics of *amu-drōs/amauros* (that which appears dim, murky, and indistinct) that characterizes the Homeric Underworld and its ghostly inhabitants.⁹⁵ Significantly, it also counts among Longinus's examples of sublimity drawn from the visual arts, and anticipates Seneca's description of the eerily luminous threshold of Hades:

At the outset the way is not obscured by darkness: there
Falls a faint brightness from the light left behind, a twilight glow of
The weakened sunshine, which baffles the eye (*ludit aciem*). Such is the light,
Mingled with darkness, familiar at dawn or dusk. Then there open
Up empty regions, spaces extensive enough for all the human race
To enter, once plunged into the earth.⁹⁶

If the chiaroscuro in the Esquiline frescoes subordinates the narrative of Odysseus's wanderings to the grandeur of the natural landscape, it has the mutually reinforcing effect of subordinating the denizens of Hades to its leading cast. Just within the archway, Odysseus sacrifices a black ram and confers with the ghost of the seer Tiresias, who leans over the pit of blood. Beyond the crowd of highlighted and identifiable figures who gather around to watch—the names of Phaidra, Ariadne, and Leda are just barely discernible—there gathers a shadowy mob of ghostly figures.

These "figures" are in fact barely recognizable as figures at all. Instead, the

painter has only sketchily portrayed them through contrasting shadows and gradations of tonal values. Ovoid shapes suggest heads, but for the most part they exist simply as patches of paint that congeal and then dissolve again, oscillating between form and formlessness as the eye darts from one area of the painting to another. Deprived of their individuality, they are defined by their very *lack* of defining features. Homer, in fact, calls them the *hoi polloi* (“the many”) or the *myria nekrōn* (“mass of the dead”), with all the social and political connotations that such anonymous collectivities convey.⁹⁷ Moreover, it was at this very historical moment that Cicero and Atticus wrote letters to each other making reference to Caesar’s henchmen as a *nekyia*, or a covert throng of sketchy, loathsome creatures from the Underworld. The shades in the Odyssey frieze similarly dramatize the stakes of visibility across a broader social surface. Resembling onlookers in the backgrounds of contemporary Roman wall paintings, they are depicted in a strict economy of minimalist marks that designate them as mere ancillary or subordinate figures.⁹⁸ Like the “extras” of modern cinema, they dissolve into the background in order to enhance the visibility of the principal actors in the scene, namely Odysseus and the ghost of Tiresias.⁹⁹ Although their depiction as shadows resembles the silhouetted *eidōla* in the white-ground lekythoi that we saw in the previous chapter, these shades do so in a different way. For rather than being depicted individually and standing out against their local environment as autonomous, identifiable subjects, the shades in the Odyssey frieze hypostasize the landscape itself, both literally and figuratively forming its backdrop and unfathomable recesses.

A second panel extends the Underworld landscape in a scene that is likewise dominated by natural rock formations (plate 2.2). Once again, the painter seems to delight in techniques of occlusion that playfully disrupt and thwart the synoptic view of the beholder. A steep cliff appears behind the left side of the pilaster that in turn cuts off the upper right arm of the splayed body of Tityos, the giant of such great dimensions that he split his mother’s womb during pregnancy and had to be carried to term by the body of the earth itself. As punishment for his attempted rape of Leto at the behest of Hera, Tityos was ravaged by vultures that ceaselessly pecked at his innards, exposing to the external world the internal organs of his body in a way that rhymes with the very conceit of the picture itself, namely the unveiling of the earth’s subterranean interior and its provisional invisibility. The compositional prominence of Tityos compounds a discomfiting sensation of spatial indeterminacy. For at the same time that it suggests that the enormous body of Tityos lies behind or beyond it in the background of the picture, it also posits the comparably diminutive figures on the cliff—perhaps Sisyphus pushing his rock up its steep slope with a tormentor close by—in a middle ground, while the Danaids fill their leaky vessels in the foreground.¹⁰⁰

Pointing to this very scene, Eleanor Winsor Leach has drawn attention to Lucre-

tius's interest in distant views or "panoramic landscapes" whose totalities can only be grasped through a process of both perceptual and intellectual dislocation.¹⁰¹ In the *prooemium* of Book 2, for example, Lucretius compares the privileged intellectual perspective that his Epicurean philosophy affords over the fear of death and suffering to a strangely libidinal encounter with its real-life counterparts as seen from a great distance:

Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation: not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant. Pleasant it is also to behold great encounters of warfare arrayed over the plains, with no part of yours in peril. But nothing is more delightful than to possess lofty sanctuaries serene, well-fortified by the teachings of the wise, whence you may look down upon others and behold them all astray, wandering abroad and seeking the path of life . . .¹⁰²

As Lucretius is at pains to make clear, this is no mere instance of *Schadenfreude*, but rather an experience of sublimity through privation in which we acquire the proper perspective to see how insignificant our human troubles really are.

Commenting on the contemporary poet's taste for such panoramic landscapes—whether with respect to the cruel punishments in the Underworld, the spectacle of the shipwreck and the battlefield, or indeed in many other places—Leach astutely observes that "The physical distance between spectator and object which is implied by panoramic vision colors the very act of imaginative perception with a sense of intellectual distance. By stationing the reader at such imagined vantage points, Lucretius encourages him to rehearse the philosophical disengagement from his physical environment that is the necessary preliminary to the banishment of superstitious fear."¹⁰³ For Leach, the Odyssey frieze thus offers a compelling pictorial analogue to the philosophical point of view that Lucretius has in mind. The framing devices of the red pilasters produce distancing effects that delimit or mark off the spatial extensions of the depicted world within the frame from the real one occupied by the beholder.

Lucretius's perspectivism is concomitant with his stated aims at the very beginning of the *De Rerum Natura* to root out superstition (*religio*), which he figures as being "cast down and trampled underfoot (*quaere religio pedibus subjecta vicissim obteritur*)."¹⁰⁴ Chastising Ennius for composing verses asserting the existence of the Underworld (*tamen esse Acherusia templa*), Lucretius sought to divest himself of at least this part of his poetic license to stake the claim that such figures are only childish fictions of the real horrors that haunt us in our daily lives.¹⁰⁵ Thus, after making his materialist arguments against the fear of death, Lucretius extends his philosophically persuasive powers at the conclusion of Book 3 to the panoramic

landscape of the Underworld and its ghostly inhabitants, making the analogy between myth and life explicit: “And assuredly whatsoever things are fabled to exist in deep Acheron, these all exist for us in this life.”¹⁰⁶ He then goes on to enumerate a list of the usual suspects, including Tantalus, Tityos, Sisyphus, the Danaids, and Cerberus, each one representing some vice or evil (the Danaids stand in for insatiable ingrates, Tantalus for the fear of death and the gods, and so on) that together form a picture of a hell of our own making.¹⁰⁷ “The fool’s life at length becomes a hell on earth (*hic Acherusia fit stultorum denique vita*),” Lucretius reasons, and philosophy is the only way to rise above it.¹⁰⁸

The juxtaposition of such extreme contrasts of scale—in terms of both the viewsheds that are given to be seen and the deliberate insertion of giants among men—lends a destabilizing, chorographic force to the landscape that telescopes between the near and distant views in a clash of perspectives. This is not a failing of the picture, as is sometimes maintained, but rather a constitutive feature of its infernal sublimity. Indeed, given that Porter has tentatively suggested that sublimity experienced a “bubble” or “vogueish appeal” from the end of the Hellenistic age through the early imperial period, it may even be profitable to think of sublimity as one of the hallmarks of the Odyssey landscapes whose emphasis on the grandeur of nature over human affairs may be a pictorial analogue to the poetic instances of the sublime that we find in descriptions of the Underworld from Apollonius of Rhodes up through Lucretius in the first century CE and beyond.¹⁰⁹

It is important to recall the architectural context in which all of this comes into view. As Timothy O’Sullivan has stressed in his suggestive reading of the Odyssey landscapes, the architectural framing of the depicted scenes is hardly decorative in any simplistic sense, but is rather essential to or even constitutive of the interpretive possibilities that the paintings afford.¹¹⁰ This is evident from a well-known passage from Vitruvius, who specifically mentions Odysseus’s wanderings through landscape (*errationes per topia*) as being appropriate decoration for the long hallways (*ambulationes*) of Roman households on account of their length.¹¹¹ Drawing attention to the experience of walking that was seen as especially conducive to philosophical ratiocinations among Roman aristocrats, O’Sullivan demonstrates the way in which the paintings invite the ambulatory beholder to analogize aspects of Homer, widely seen as the “father” of philosophy in the first century CE, within the context of contemporary philosophical schools of thought. Building on O’Sullivan’s argument, it is worth noting that unlike Aeneas, who does indeed meander through the Underworld landscape with the Sibyl as his travel guide, Odysseus himself makes no such investigative, itinerant journey: rather, the ghosts come to *him* in order to drink the sacrificial blood. Earlier depictions like the so-called “Tiresias Vase,” a fourth-century BCE Lucanian calyx-krater, show the ghost of the dead seer rising up from the depths of the Underworld, the limit of which is

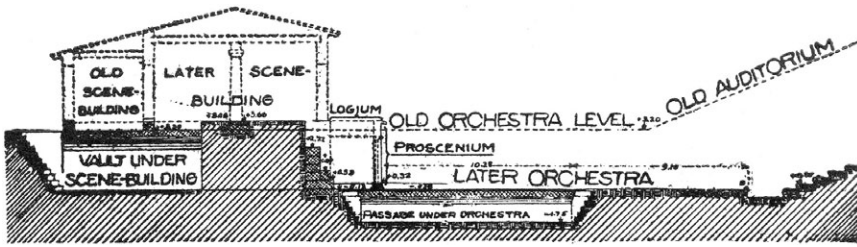


Fig. 2.5 Diagram illustrating Charon's steps (after Flickinger 1918).

indicated by the decorative border of the vase (what Schapiro would call the “non-mimetic element of the image-sign”) (plate 2.4).¹¹²

The conceit of such a threshold of (in)visibility for the comings and goings of ghostly figures in the built environment has an intriguing precedent in the apparatus of stagecraft. Julius Pollux, an Egyptian-born Greek lexicographer of the second century CE, included a wondrous element of theater design in his *Onomasticon* that is particularly suggestive in this regard (4.121–132): “The Charonian steps (*charō-nioi klimakes*), which lie at the bottom of the steps down from the *theatrum*, allow ghosts to rise.”¹¹³ The “Charonian steps” thus allowed stage ghosts or chthonic deities to pass beneath the *proskēnion*, or stage façade, and appear out of a small crack in the middle of the orchestra, to the astonishment of the audience.¹¹⁴ This must have had a profound visual impact that would have echoed the achievements of Aeschylus, whom an anonymous biographer later credited with having “decked out the stage and stunned his audience with brilliant visual effects, with paintings and machines, with stage props such as altars and tombs, with trumpets, ghosts, and Furies.”¹¹⁵ Unlike these earlier attempts to generate fantastic effects in a theatrical setting—from revolving stage sets to the winches and pulleys used to lower gods or beasts from the sky—the steps, known only from scant archaeological remains in the Hellenistic theaters at Eretria and Argos, required no mechanical contrivance and were completely concealed from the spectator’s view (fig 2.5).¹¹⁶ It was the simplicity of the effect that beggared belief.¹¹⁷ Such effects were evidently well known in later republican and early imperial times. Commenting on Appius Claudius’s immensely unpopular recall from exile, Cicero compared the clandestine activities of the reviled praetor to the dramatic presentation of a stage ghost. Eager to see a gladiatorial spectacle, but knowing that his presence would incur the wrath of the plebs, Appius would take the back door and emerge from the floorboards of the bleachers like an actor ascending Charon’s steps. Hence Appius’s “skulking” (*latebriosor*), secret path came to be called “the Appian way.”¹¹⁸

In contrast to these pictorial, theatrical, and even political techniques of occultation and obfuscation, the Underworld view of the Odyssey fresco thus affords the

beholder the privileged vantage point that is otherwise denied to Odysseus. At the same time, the reason the second panel is so abbreviated compared to the first is that a real, physical gap in the form of a door broke up this section of the frieze.¹¹⁹ Hence the beholder moved not only along the painted portico, but through it as well. What might seem like an egregious breach of pictorial and narrative continuity to modern eyes was nevertheless a common feature of Roman wall painting, which had no qualms about slicing through intricately illusionistic painted surfaces to carve out a window or a doorway as needed—a phenomenon that Mantha Zarmakoupi has felicitously called the “perforated architectural body” of the built environment.¹²⁰ Rather than seeing this as a defect in the sense that the door pierces or rends the screen of its representational and perspectival fiction, the ubiquity of this practice in Roman wall painting suggests an alternative explanation: that this lateral hiatus or interval, itself a hallmark of the sublime, stages the conditions for the embodied experience of viewers in real space—the subject of the following section—and the reinsertion of that experience into the narrative logic of the paratactic scenes.

SEPULCHRAL ITINERARIES

This final section explores how the built environment of the sepulchral chamber and its decoration was designed to analogize the journey to the tomb as a journey to the Underworld. In doing so, I aim to consider how the depictive elements of the sepulchral space—chief among them Roman floor mosaics, but also stucco reliefs and wall paintings—annex its various surfaces and architectural features. At issue here is thus not only formal questions about individual artworks, but also “post-formalist” questions about the imaging of those artworks in real (rather than depictive) space.¹²¹ As such, I am interested in the embodied experience of real, living persons in flesh and blood, namely the bereaved who performs their own *katabasis* (descent) and *anabasis* (ascent) by moving through the tomb itself.¹²² By traversing the mosaic pavements underfoot, passing through doors, or descending and ascending the perilous stairwells in the darkened chamber, the visitors to the tomb performatively repeated the very actions of the figures that decorate these surfaces that provide a kind of virtual script for how to move about the space. Significantly, such figures are drawn from the world of Greek myth that offer exemplary roles for the bereaved to model their own behavior—a topic that Paul Zanker and Björn Ewald have taken up with respect to the world of Roman mythological sarcophagi, and which I consider in the following chapter.¹²³ In this way, I suggest, the mythological figures in these tombs, not to mention the spaces they adorn, belong just

as much to the culture of *paideia* in the Second Sophistic as Hadrian's Hades discussed above and its broader conceptual context in the expanded field of empire.¹²⁴

By invoking the comparison to Hadrian's Villa and its infernal *periegesis*, however, I want to avoid the suggestion of some kind of dominant imperial model of spatiality on which all the objects under discussion hang together by the same set of rules or conventions. Indeed, while modern scholars have drawn up maps of the Underworld largely on the basis of descriptions in epic poetry, the fact of the matter is that we have no such cartographic depictions of the Underworld that survive from antiquity, much less any suggestion that any such images were ever produced by the ancients themselves.¹²⁵ The well-known quote from Plautus's *Captives* in which the slave Tyndarus pronounces that "I've often seen many pictures of the tortures taking place in the Underworld" (*vidi ego multa saepe picta, quae Acherunti fierent cruciamenta*) is unfortunately of little use to us in terms of shedding any light on what such pictures actually *looked* like, and in any case it is significant that the whole point of this remark in the play is that such pictures don't come close to representing the hell that *he's* been living through as a prisoner of war condemned to the quarries.¹²⁶

It is the analogy with Hades and the toiling bodies that haunt its hidden spaces that is relevant here in much the same way, as Zanker and Ewald have argued, that images of Greek myth on Roman sarcophagi had more to do with communicating to the bereaved than encoding abstruse eschatological belief-systems of the deceased.¹²⁷ Accordingly, I'd like to suggest that the sepulchral space activates not so much a strictly cartographic form of space that inevitably requires the use of various, often vague, abstractions, but one that Pietro Janni has characterized as "hodo-logical" in that it prioritizes the wandering of sensuous bodies through a given environment in the form of an itinerant journey—a psychological distinction that shares much in common with the aesthetics of chorography (which, although it is technically speaking cartographic, eschews the geometrical ideality of geographic forms of cartography, as discussed in the first section).¹²⁸ By invoking the term "hodo-logy" (which, despite its Greek etymology, is not an ancient one), I simply wish to evoke the tension produced by the experience of the bereaved in the real space of the tomb and the imaginative space of the Underworld, and the ramifying ways in which the two become mutually reinforced.¹²⁹

In the city of Rome and its environs, the cramped and dimly lit conditions of the tomb chamber, visited not only for the original funerary ritual, but also on numerous subsequent occasions for feast days of remembrance by the bereaved, offered an especially evocative space that in many ways must have resembled the imaginative space of the Underworld. In particular, I want to draw attention to a selection of floor mosaics in order to extend some of the recent work that has been

done on this topic that grapples with the traditional view that regards mosaics simply as “paintings in stone,” effectively canceling their medium specificity and their horizontal orientation (in contrast to the vertical orientation of paintings) for a mobile observer.¹³⁰ Rebecca Molholt evocatively describes the uniquely multi-sensory dimensions of the medium: “The meaning of the Roman floor mosaic was inseparable from its experience as a tangible surface, one typically appreciated by an ambulatory viewer situated in and aware of a specific architectural setting. We need to rethink such mosaics as forms and materials underfoot and to examine them kinesthetically, as experiences that are by no means purely visual. Footsteps can define a place—even an imaginary place.”¹³¹

The tomb was one such place that was defined and even advertised by the measure of a human foot. For legal reasons, inscriptions on the façades of many tombs in the environs of Rome display the area of a plot according to the Roman unit of feet (e.g., *in fr(onte) p(edes) XXV in agr(o) p(edes) XX*, “25 feet in front and 20 feet deep”), thus underscoring the way in which the sepulchral space was produced both conceptually through the mechanisms of Roman funerary law and systems of measurement as well as through the lived experience of the passerby or the bereaved.¹³² Much of the pioneering work that has been done on the phenomenology of Roman floor mosaics in recent decades has been devoted to those adorning villas and baths whose expansive, well-lit views offer an important spatial context for the various social interactions that occur within them.¹³³ Tomb mosaics, however, have not received a corresponding treatment in their typically darkened, cramped contexts. Yet, as I hope to show, their likening of the tomb to the Underworld in a distinctly perceptual and performative fashion has the power to transform these constraints and incapacities into imaginative possibilities where the work of mourning could unfold.

A floor mosaic in Tomb I of the Vatican Necropolis, dated to the 160s CE, offers a seductive, if violent, invitation to think about the depicted action of the Underworld in concert with the ambulatory movement of the bereaved (fig. 2.6).¹³⁴ The chamber is rather modest in scale, with a vaulted ceiling (now collapsed) and walls fitted with niches for the deposition of cremated remains and *arcosolia* along the floor for inhumation burials (plate 2.5). The ceiling and walls were richly painted, with many of the wall panels featuring various species of birds—swans, doves, and peacocks—as well as human figures, one pair of which has been convincingly identified as Hercules leading Alcestis back from the dead (the others are too poorly preserved to determine with any degree of certainty). All of this serves to frame the mosaic underfoot that serves as the ground of action for the interment of the deceased and the recurrent visits by the bereaved. Hunting scenes occupy the frame of the mosaic, the center of which depicts the rape of Persephone. While the goddess herself has not been preserved, the rest of the dynamic group remains intact:



Fig. 2.6 Mosaic depicting the rape of Persephone, Tomb I, Vatican Necropolis.

Photo: By kind permission of the Fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano.

Hermes, caduceus in hand, leads the way as Hades, right arm partly wound up and constrained by the billowing mantle of Persephone, holds the reins of his horse-drawn quadriga. Below them, flowers and their stripped petals spill out from overturned baskets left behind by Persephone and her playmates, who were picking flowers in a meadow when Hades burst onto the scene.

Even on its own, a floor mosaic depicting the rape of Persephone would have evoked a deeper self-consciousness between the ground underfoot and the ground that swallowed the resisting goddess against her will.¹³⁵ While there are other tomb mosaics depicting this theme, what makes the example from the Vatican Necropolis distinctive is the way it compounds this dissolution between myth and life in the architectural features of the chamber and its painted decoration. This is most vividly conveyed by the painted dado below the cinerary niches that shows, in a paratactic series of segments, the same varieties of flowers—roses, lilies, and daisies—that appear in the mosaic below. Thus, the mosaic and painted dado work in concert to synthesize competing axes of horizontality and verticality, the latter of which is embodied not only in the wall but also in the standing observer who stands at a right angle to the floor. The visitor thus walks “through” a field of flowers at the

same time that they walk “over” the flattened, floral detritus. The effect must have recalled the conceit of the “unswept floor,” a famous Hellenistic mosaic by Sosus surviving in numerous copies and adaptations that depicted a *trompe l’oeil* tableau of discarded scraps of food as if tossed onto the floor following a lavish banquet. At the same time, it may also have recalled the ritual of the *rosalia*, in which roses and rose petals were brought to adorn the tomb by the extended family of the deceased who gathered there for commemorative funerary banquets.¹³⁶

On either side of the longitudinal axis of the tomb, just beneath the central niches, two *arcosolia* carve out a space in the dado for the interment of the deceased. The placement of the *arcosolia* corresponds precisely to the place on the floor where Persephone was abducted, and an overturned basket painted above each of them mirrors the ones in the mosaic below. The *arcosolia* effectively open the image, bringing the depictive worlds of the dado and the mosaic together into a violent collision of real and virtual spaces.¹³⁷ Yet, in keeping with the bipolar perspective of the chthonic sublime, the decoration of the sepulchral space resists any stable reading. Above the central niches, lunettes underneath the vaulted ceiling feature scenes of peacocks grazing among the flowers that are identical to the ones in the dado below. The shapes of the lunettes themselves match the shapes of the *arcosolia* as if a section of painting had been carved out from the ground and affixed to the top of the wall. The effect of this perceptual dislocation lets the deceased identify with Persephone and her dual perspective above and below. At the same time, it allows the bereaved upon entering the tomb to identify with Demeter and her plaintive search for her abducted daughter.

A corollary to the destabilizing effects of the relationship between the built environment and its decoration can be seen on a sarcophagus discovered at Velletri in the environs of Rome. The casket is perhaps best known for its many half-open doors—a common motif in Roman sepulchral art in earlier cinerary urns and later sarcophagi—through which mythological figures are granted special dispensation to depart from the Underworld (fig. 2.7).¹³⁸ Verity Platt has recently drawn attention to the way in which this motif echoes the framing functions of Roman sarcophagi in general as lavish containers that frame the body of the deceased and recursively frame the dialectics between inside and outside, concealment and revelation, through various subsidiary devices drawn from a diverse repertory of architectonic elements.¹³⁹ Such doors are shown in various states of opening across a range of examples, with those that are most open even requiring marble supports to keep them connected to the structural integrity of the front panel, in some sense pushing the limit conditions of the medium of relief sculpture both to its notional and literal breaking point.¹⁴⁰ Like other Asiatic sarcophagi, the framing devices of the doors are accompanied by a host of other structural features that liken the Underworld to an elaborate, if miniaturized, architectural edifice: a gabled roof,



Fig. 2.7 Velletri sarcophagus, ca. 150–170 CE. Marble. Museo Archeologico, Velletri.
Photo: J. Boehringer, DAI Inst. Neg. 59.53.

evoking the sarcophagus as a *domus aeterna*; molded cornices that are in turn supported below by Atlas figures interspersed on one side by familiar mythological figures such as Sisyphus, Tantalus, and the Danaids presented in a more or less spaceless, rigid parataxis; and an entablature with alternating arcuated and triangular pediments inhabited by allegorical figures of the entire cosmic order: Caelus or Jupiter in the heavens at the center, flanked by the sun, the moon, and sea creatures, all of which serve to frame the enthroned Pluto and Persephone below.

The juxtaposition of these supernal and infernal deities recalls Longinus's reference to Homer in which Poseidon threatens to burst straight through the floor of the seabed into the ceiling of Hades itself, thus exposing the interstices of the upper world and the Underworld in a sublime rupture of visibility. Not coincidentally, it is directly beneath this group of figures that the origin myth of such a rupture appears: Hades, having absconded with Persephone, drives his chariot headlong into the earth, represented allegorically either by Tellus, the traditional figure of earth, or perhaps by Nyx and the profundity of her metaphorical darkness (fig. 2.8). Like the billowing mantle of Caelus or Jupiter above, that of Tellus/Nyx constitutes an epiphanic mode of appearance, albeit one attributed to chthonian rather than atmospheric conditions, of heights in depths. The contours of her drapery constitute the interface between exteriority and interiority, light and darkness, visibility and invisibility. By concealing and revealing and even revealing *by* concealing, her



Fig. 2.8 Velletri sarcophagus (detail of Nyx), ca. 150–170 CE. Marble. Museo Archeologico, Velletri. Photo: H. Koppermann, DAI Inst. Neg. 59.325.

billowing drapery constitutes a formal and allegorizing articulation of sublimity, of a world turned inside out.

The metaphors of darkness and the aesthetics of the sublime were vividly conjured up in a late second-century black and white floor mosaic located in the lower chamber of Tomb 86 in the Isola Sacra Necropolis near Rome (fig. 2.9).¹⁴¹ The inscription on the façade of the tomb states that it was erected by a certain freedwoman, Clodia Prepusa, for herself, her husband, and their freed slaves and their descendants, even giving the measurements of the plot as twenty Roman feet across and forty feet deep.¹⁴² Although Roman floor mosaics are often characterized by a proliferation of abstract designs or a kind of *horror vacui* bursting with numerous figures in crowded compositions, this one is strikingly minimalist by comparison: Charon, ferryman of the Styx and Acheron, punts through the inky waters with a female passenger, his ghostly cargo. Although Roman black and white mosaics are extremely common, they almost always employ black tesserae for the figures and white ones for the ground (fig. 2.10).¹⁴³ In this case, however, the mosaicist has taken the very unusual step of reversing this order so as to represent the Underworld and its ghostly inhabitants in a purely negative relation to the world above. The effect must have had even stronger resonances for the visitors who, after ascending



Fig. 2.9 Tomb 86 (external view), Isola Sacra Necropolis. Photo: By kind permission of the Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, Archivio Fotografico.

and then descending a short but steep staircase up and then down into the lower chamber, were plunged into darkness save for the flickering lamplight, themselves transformed into figures on the ground.

For an informed viewer—and I would hasten to add that the servile past of Clodia Prepusa and her husband would in no way preclude such a possibility—the mosaic might have called to mind a passage from Vergil’s *Georgics* that situates the invisible realm of the Underworld beneath our feet:

As our globe rises steep to Scythia and the Rhiphaean crags, so it slopes downward to Libya’s southland. One pole is ever high above (*sublimis*) us, while the other, beneath our feet (*sub pedibus*), is visible to black Styx and the shades infernal.¹⁴⁴

Whether or not Vergil truly envisions the realm of the *manes* occupying the same space as the Antarctic regions of the antipodes, which he elsewhere imagines to have daylight while we live in darkness and vice versa, what is perhaps most interesting for present purposes is the way in which he accords to the Styx and the ghosts below (*Styx atra videt Manesque profundi*) the power to see what we cannot, thanks to their diametrically opposite perspective.¹⁴⁵ By “remythologizing” the Under-



Fig. 2.10 Tomb 86 (internal view with Charon mosaic), Isola Sacra Necropolis.

Photo: By kind permission of the Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, Archivio Fotografico.

world with this alternative perspective, Vergil evokes Lucretius's aforementioned attack on superstition by appealing to the sublime view whereby "the walls of the world dissolve" and "the earth is no hindrance to all being clearly seen, whatever goes on below under our feet (*sub pedibus*) throughout the void."¹⁴⁶ Situated on a hazy spectrum between these two extreme positions, the mosaic dramatizes the stakes of this bipolar sublimity: on the one hand, to affirm the floor *qua* floor as Vergil does and to traverse the Underworld underfoot (*sub pedibus*); on the other, to assert Lucretius's Lynceus-like ability to "see through" the floor and to recognize the infernal characters for what they really are—insubstantial, empty images, and nothing more.

Set within the space of the tomb, its floor lined with three travertine caskets,

the mosaic of Charon and his ghostly passenger might have virtualized a kind of Underworld mise-en-scène for the visitor who was encouraged to think about their own fate in addition to that of the relative who had been laid to rest there. For even without such sophisticated, literary points of reference, the very passage of the visitor across the floor and through the space of the tomb entailed the traversal of both a physical and metaphysical plane. The black tesserae used for the majority of the pavement, coupled with the flickering lamplight, would have obliterated almost all sense of depth of field and separated the complementary relations of vision and touch in a manner that recalls Merleau-Ponty's evocative description of night as a disquieting experience of dislocated embodiment, "pure depth without foreground or background, without surfaces and without distance separating it from me."¹⁴⁷ Indeed, beyond its obvious pertinence to themes of death and burial, the iconography of the mosaic—the passage over the shadowy river in the realm of the shades—has to do with the way in which the picture becomes seemingly dislodged from its material support of colored stone and "activated," as it were, in the phantasmagorical conditions of its environment, namely *darkness*.¹⁴⁸

Ancient discourses on the phenomenology of color offer some productive ways of thinking about the pictorial coordination of black and white figures imaged in darkness. Greek and Latin descriptions of ghosts and ghostly costume testify to the perceptually disorienting effect produced by white figures illuminated by ethereal moonlight or black figures who are alternatively ensconced in darkness.¹⁴⁹ Both Herodotus and Pausanias, for instance, refer to the Phocians' cunning stratagem of smearing their faces and armor with plaster on a moonlit battlefield in order to induce shock and awe among the Thessalians, who duly froze in their tracks in response to this *teras*—a shimmering wonder to behold.¹⁵⁰ Tacitus describes a similar, yet inverted, tactic used by the Harii, who would terrorize their foes by painting their shields black before attacking on the darkest of nights so that "by sheer panic and shadowy effect they strike terror like an army of ghosts (*umbra feralis exercitus*). No enemy can face this novel and, as it were, hellish vision (*infernum adspectum*): in every battle, after all, the feeling of being conquered comes to the eye first (*oculi vincuntur*)."¹⁵¹ Tacitus's description registers the intensely ocular interaction of military engagement in general—one whose viscosity of violence is ratcheted up by the monochrome aesthetic of a nocturnal attack.

Against the prevailing view that ghosts in antiquity were "achromatic" (in the sense that they were only black or white), I want to suggest that black and white ghosts signaled not only a perceptual problem of color in terms of pigment, but indeed even a problem of perception itself.¹⁵² The kind of color that I have in mind here thus includes what the Greeks called the *chrōs* and the Romans *color*, that is, the skin or surface of things on which color appears and becomes itself visible.¹⁵³ The ancients did not describe ghosts as transparent figures according to the Gothic

imagination with which we moderns may be most familiar, but it may nonetheless be useful to briefly recall its ancient precursor in the Aristotelian concept of the *diaphanē*, or “transparency.” For Aristotle, the object of vision is color. Despite what we might assume, the *diaphanē* does not designate transparent bodies like air or water so much as a “nature” through which color may be seen; it is a phenomenological event in that we simply see that something *appears to be* transparent.¹⁵⁴ While Aristotle does not define this nature more precisely, he does say that its potentiality is darkness (*skotos*) and that its actuality is light (it is important that the colors of black and white designate the extremes of this “spectrum” between potentiality and actuality; Aristotle maintains that it is the mixture of these two colors that produces all of the intermediate colors).¹⁵⁵ Because color is the object of vision, light is the color of the *diaphanē* in actuality; darkness, on the contrary, is the color of the *diaphanē* in potentiality. Aristotle’s key insight is that even when we do not see anything in the dark, we nevertheless *feel* ourselves seeing. Thus our experience of darkness evinces not only our ability *not* to see a particular object of vision, but also our ability to experience and apprehend privation in general.

Cassius Dio’s account of the emperor Domitian hosting a “black dinner party” for his enemies offers a concrete and entertaining context for thinking about the aesthetic, and in this case even political, connections between pigment and perception:

[Domitian] prepared a room pitch black on every side—ceiling, walls, and floor—along with bare couches, also black, which rested on the uncovered floor. Then he invited in his guests, alone, at night, without their slave attendants. Slabs shaped like gravestones were placed next to each diner, bearing his name, and also small lamps, such as hang in tombs. Then comely naked boys, likewise painted black, entered like phantoms, and after circling the guests in an awe-inspiring dance, took up positions at their feet. After this, slaves set before the guests all manner of foods normally offered at sacrifices to the departed spirits, the food colored black and contained in black dishes. So every guest feared and trembled, expecting that his throat would be cut at the very next moment, the more so since no one but Domitian broke the dreadful silence. It was as if they were already in the realms of the dead, since the emperor himself conversed only on topics relating to death and to slaughter.¹⁵⁶

This passage has enjoyed considerable renown in part for its documentation of emperors behaving badly and the pleasures of the Roman banquet taken to a perverse extreme.¹⁵⁷ The most salient aspect of the story for present purposes has to do with the black color applied (or exploited, in the case of the obsidian plates) to the furnishings, food, and even the slaves in this masquerade, and more generally with the fact that Domitian, by emulating a sepulchral context, had created a kind of sensory deprivation chamber for his guests that included even the “sound” of

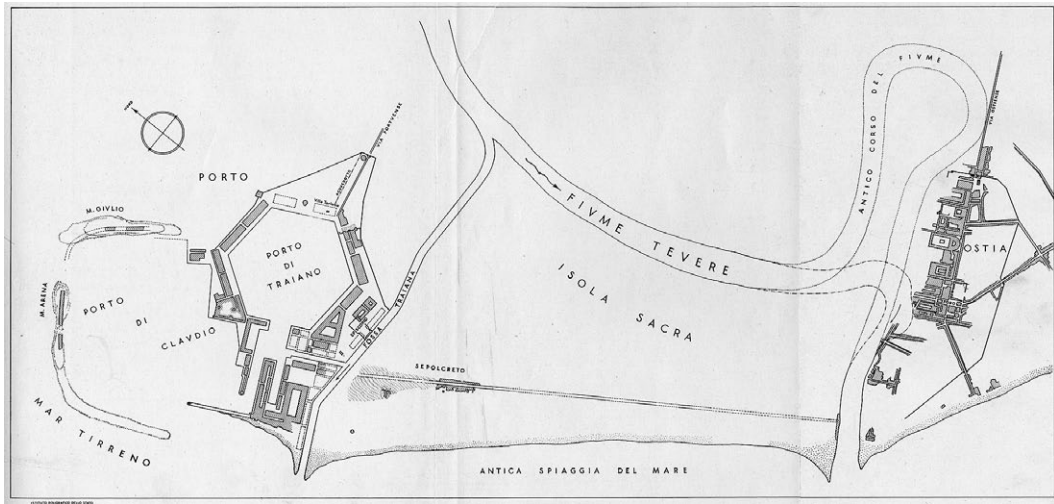


Fig. 2.11 Map of Isola Sacra Necropolis (after Calza 1940). Photo: By kind permission of the Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, Archivio Fotografico.

silence punctuated by the emperor's threatening quips.¹⁵⁸ The “color” of ghosts in this sense, therefore, derives from the indistinct sensations produced by physiology and pigment working in concert.

In addition to the experience of darkness, the iconography of Charon's ferry service dramatizes the experience of the journey to the sepulchral chamber for both the deceased and the bereaved alike. Aside from the fact that the mosaic was only accessible by descending a narrow staircase, thus requiring the visitor to perform a kind of katabasis into the tomb, the depiction of passage across a river must have been intimately familiar given the mercantile significance of shipping in this community; it would also trigger memories of the very real steps that it took to get to the tomb in the first place. After all, Isola Sacra is an island, albeit an artificial one formed through Trajan's construction projects at the harbor of Portus, where he built a canal that constitutes the northern edge of the necropolis, with the Tiber and the sea forming its natural borders (fig. 2.11).¹⁵⁹ Thus the deceased had to be ferried across the Tiber (or else across the canal) in order to reach their final resting place. On each subsequent visit, the bereaved repeated this same set of actions in order to reach the tomb for various days of remembrance. Moreover, then as now, the necropolis was prone to frequent flooding: only in the early third century were tombs moved farther away from the street and up onto higher ground.¹⁶⁰ It may well have been the case, then, that the visitor occasionally had to wade through several inches of murky water in the lower tomb chamber, where the real water of the Tiber and the depicted water of the Styx became noxiously commingled.¹⁶¹

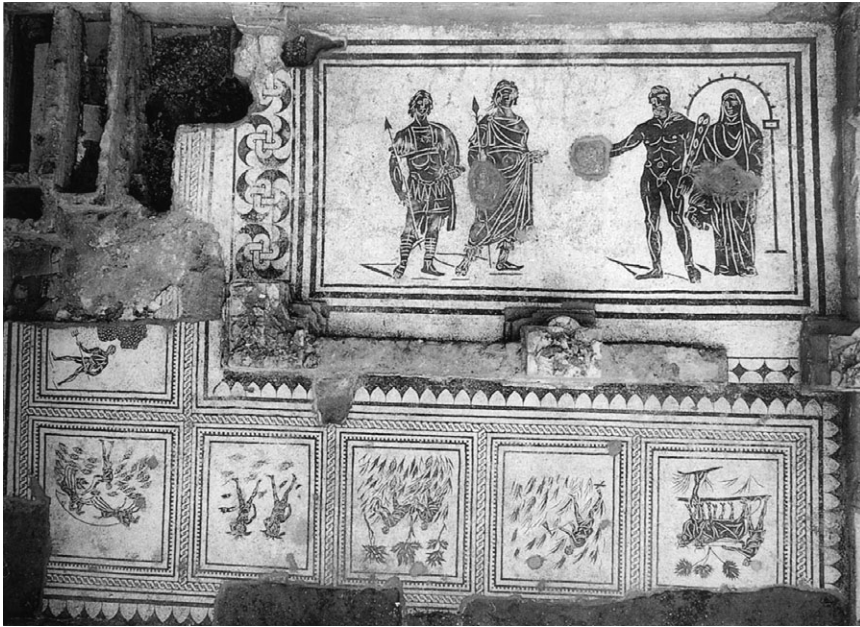


Fig. 2.12 Alcestis mosaic from the Tomba della Mietitura, Isola Sacra Necropolis.

Photo: By kind permission of the Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, Archivio Fotografico.

Art and architecture thus coalesce in the floor mosaic and its virtual construction of a space that in turn structures the narrative possibilities as they unfold both at a distance and directly underfoot. This is especially evident in the Tomba della Mietitura, dated to the Antonine period.¹⁶² The black and white mosaic comprises a rectilinear pictorial field bound by a frame in which Admetus and a companion, apparently dressed in hunting gear, meet Hercules and his wife Alcestis emerging from the arched entrance to the Underworld on the right (fig. 2.12). The scene, as I shall explore more fully in the subsequent chapter, depicts the denouement of the myth of Alcestis, in which the queen who voluntarily died in place of her husband—an outstanding act of self-sacrifice that made her a role model of pious virtue in numerous funerary inscriptions and images—is brought back to life and placed before her incredulous husband who can't believe his good fortune. The mosaic covers the courtyard of a funerary enclosure that was bordered by a covered portico with its own program of mosaics featuring scenes of harvesting. The visitor to the tomb could access the Alcestis mosaic from the portico on either the western or southeastern end, while the mosaic itself gave access to another funerary chamber ("cella a") to the immediate east.

The placement of the mosaic in front of this chamber seems designed to elicit an identification between the reunion of the bereaved with the deceased at the

tomb and that of Admetus with Alcestis at the threshold of the Underworld.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, the evocative space *between* Admetus (who, as we shall see in the following chapter, was convinced that Hercules had delivered him only the ghost of his wife, and not the woman herself in flesh and blood) and his resurrected wife may have underscored the fleeting nature of this reunion. Moreover, the version of the myth by Euripides—a staple of Roman theater, especially in its hugely popular adaptations in narrated pantomime performance—would have recalled the words of Admetus, who made the following promise to Alcestis as she lay dying: “For I shall command my children here to bury me in the same coffin with you and to lay out my body next to yours. Never, even in death, may I be parted from you, the woman who alone has been faithful to me!”¹⁶⁴ Even after she had expired, he continued on with his mournful rage: “Why did you keep me from throwing myself into the open grave and lying there dead with her, the best of women?”¹⁶⁵ Alcestis may be the one who dies, but, perhaps like the bereaved, all Admetus can do is think about his own demise in the anterior future when the two of them will at last be reunited in death.

In contrast to the ambiguous resolution in the myth of Alcestis, at least in its Euripidean version, a stucco relief depicting the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia from the tomb of P. Aelius Maximus, also from the Isola Sacra Necropolis, depicts a willingness—indeed, perhaps even a desire—to accept the finality of death (fig. 2.13).¹⁶⁶ Unlike the sarcophagi representing the myth discussed in the previous chapter, the stucco offers an imaginative view of what came *after* that which the poets and mythographers describe: not the brief reunion between Laodamia and the ghost of Protesilaus in her widowed bedchamber, but the reunion of the couple in the Underworld. In this way, the relief offers a bittersweet counterpoint to the elegiac sensibility evoked in the sarcophagus imagery. Compounding the iconographic dimension of the relief is the context of its display in the sepulchral context. Situated at the spring of the barrel vault at the back of the chamber, the depicted vault in the relief chimes with the real architecture of the tomb, thus establishing a potential resonance between the bereaved and the deceased on the one hand, and the mythological protagonists in the Underworld on the other. For while the two sarcophagi depicting the myth focus on the temporary reunion of the lovers, going so far as to foreshadow Laodamia’s suicide while stopping just short of actually showing its consequences, the relief does just that. The composition is nearly a mirror image of the later Alcestis mosaic: on the left, Hercules ushers Laodamia through the arched gateway of the Underworld—not out of it, as he does with Alcestis, but *into* it—while an enthroned Pluto welcomes his new subject with the shrouded figure of Protesilaus at his side, as if to preside over a renewal of their marriage vows.

In contrast to these two perspectives—reuniting with the lover in life on the

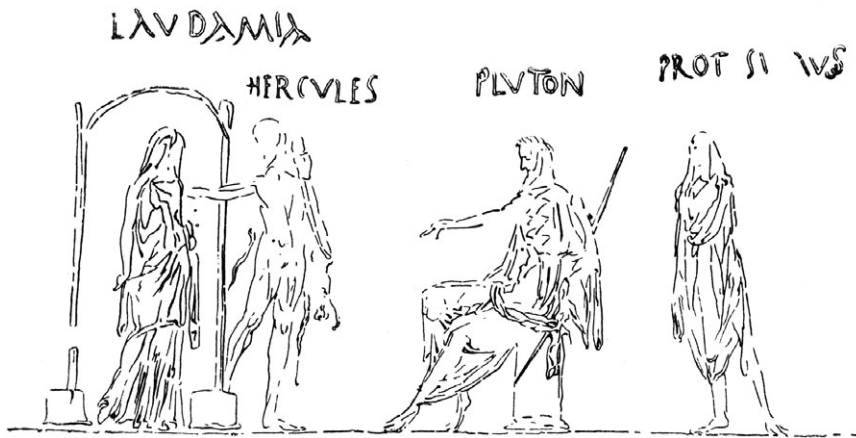


Fig. 2.13 Stucco relief depicting Protesilaus and Laodamia from the Tomb of P. Aelius Maximus, Isola Sacra Necropolis (after Calza 1928).

one hand, and in death on the other—the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice offers a mythological paradigm whose poignant climax forecloses such tidy resolutions. A wall painting discovered in the columbarium of Decimus Foliis Mela in the Porta Laurentina Necropolis, just to the south of Ostia, depicts at its center the most famous instant of the narrative: Orpheus, lyre in hand and moving toward the left, turns back to gaze upon the face of his wife, Eurydice, who throws up her hands in anguished surprise (plate 2.6).¹⁶⁷ The lovers are not alone, but are flanked on either side by a cast of familiar Underworld characters. To the right, a seated Ocnus weaves a pleated rope consumed as quickly as he fashions it by a famished donkey—an allegorical punishment of fruitless labor like that of Sisyphus—while Pluto and Persephone watch on in some indeterminate space beyond. To the left, the Janitor Orci, or custodian of Hades, keeps watch over the open gates as he holds the three-headed hellhound Cerberus on a short leash.

Ever since its discovery in 1865, this painting has been regarded as little more than a prosaic and mediocre attempt at depicting an otherwise stirring moment from a mythological narrative through the most seemingly banal and mechanical composition of rigid parataxis. What has gone unnoticed is the tremendous creativity that went into thinking about how the depicted scene works in tandem with the built environment. Although we tend to overlook such things, the painted frame of the picture is not as ordinary as it might appear at first glance.¹⁶⁸ Close examination reveals that the mythological scene has been conceived as though it had been painted on a canvas or linen support whose black frame has been punctured and threaded so as to keep it taught and stretched within a secondary red

frame.¹⁶⁹ The frame of the picture thus goes to unusual and elaborate lengths to disengage it from the continuous surface of the wall, if only then to double down and depictively reaffirm the (real) flatness of its (fictive) material support. In this vein, it belongs to a long tradition of *trompe l'oeil* tomb painting in classical art in which illusionistic nails in the wall hold up garlands, pomegranates, and other assorted grave offerings.

But the conceit of this picture goes even further than that, taking into consideration the relationship between the flow of movement both in the depicted space of the painting as well as in the sepulchral space itself. Ingeniously, the painter situated the picture above three cinerary niches just to the left as the bereaved entered the tomb or, much more evocatively, just to the right as one exits (fig. 2.14). Hence, every time they left the tomb after visiting for some commemorative feast day and temporarily communing with the deceased, the bereaved couldn't help but analogize their own experience with the plight of the mythical protagonists. The depicted threshold of the Underworld was juxtaposed to the actual one of the tomb, thus blurring the distinctions between fantasy and reality and perhaps renewing the sting of his loss with each visit. On this view, even the harshly criticized parataxis of the figures begins to register a more familiar convention: such evenly spaced figures are often to be found, for example, in ritual scenes of processional movement.¹⁷⁰ These often occur in sacrifices, for example, but they are also to be found in funerary processions. The tomb painting thus brings together not only the element of role-play that the mythological setting elicits, but also the *forms* that such performative actions take in aspects of both myth and daily life.

The embodied experience of the columbarium of Decimus Folius Mela—the way it stages and structures affective scenarios of grief between the deceased and the bereaved through decidedly kinesthetic forms of address—leads us back, finally, to the mosaic of Orpheus and Eurydice in the Underworld with which I began this chapter (plate 2.1).¹⁷¹ Without knowing anything about the archaeological context of the mosaic, it remains frustratingly difficult to resolve how the ambulatory viewer would have interacted with the images underfoot in the sepulchral environment. Nevertheless, we might recall Molholt's suggestion that "Footsteps can define a place—even an imaginary place," an observation that she makes in the context of her phenomenological study of Roman labyrinth mosaics. Like the labyrinth, the journey to the Underworld was likewise conceived as a mazelike convolution of steps that had to be traced and retraced. In the *Aeneid*, the Sibyl famously warns Aeneas that "easy is the descent (*facilis descensus*) to Avernus: night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open; but to recall one's steps (*revocare gradum*) and pass out into the upper air, this is the task, this the toil (*hoc opus, hic labor est*)!"¹⁷²

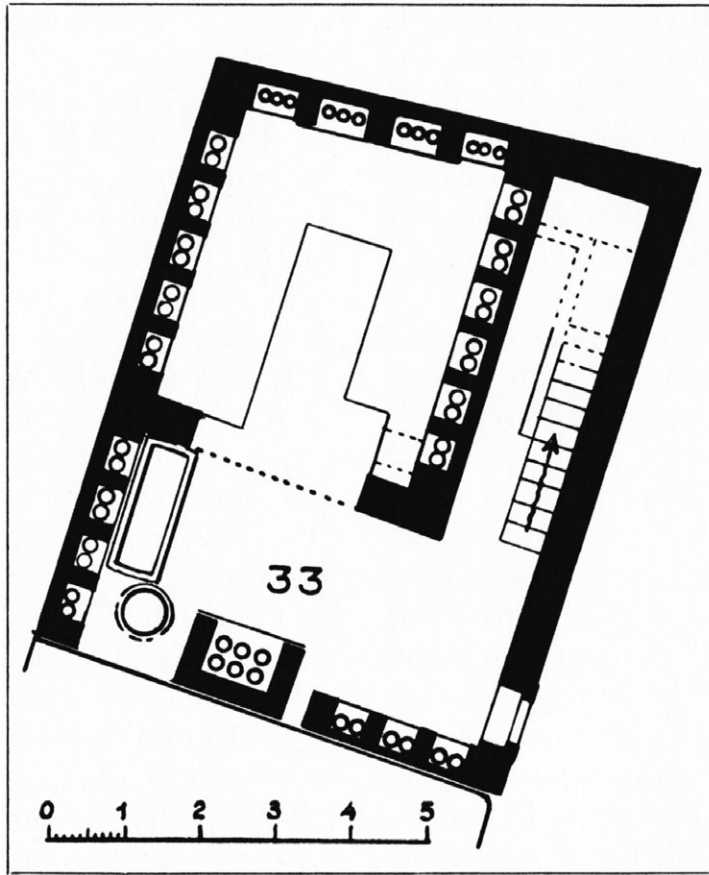


Fig. 2.14 Plan of the Tomb of D. Folius Mela (Tomb 33), Porta Laurentina Necropolis (after Squarciapino 1953).

Orpheus, too, “retraced his steps (*pedem referens*)” in the *Georgics*, and would have been successful were it not for his fateful retrospection.¹⁷³ “In that instant all his toil was spilt like water (*effusus labor*),” Vergil says, thus conflating Orpheus’s cupidinous gaze with the allegorical figures of wasted effort, presented here in the form of the insatiable Danaids, restlessly toiling to fill their leaky vessels and yet forever unable to enjoy the fruits of their labor.¹⁷⁴ Other figures offer invitations for interaction that insist on their liminal status: one can imagine the bereaved stepping “into” and hopping “out” of Charon’s skiff as if to affirm that it is not yet one’s time to die, or perhaps recalling Ovid’s sorrowful mention of how, after losing Eurydice, “Orpheus prayed and wished in vain to cross the Styx a second time, but the ferryman (*portitor*) drove him back”; additionally, the diminutive figure of Cerberus situated at the “jaws” (*fauces*) or threshold of the Underworld recalls the



Fig. 2.15 Digitally modified image of plate 2.1. Courtesy of a New York collector.

admonitory “Cave Canem” (“beware of the dog”) mosaics placed at the *fauces* of Pompeian households.¹⁷⁵

What kind of space, if that’s even the right word here, does the Orpheus mosaic depict? For the mobile observer who optically scans the surface of the mosaic across the room while treading across its tessellated surface, it is useful to attend to Molholt’s consideration of “mosaic compositions that endeavor to take into account the simultaneity—of horizontality and of verticality—built into any experience of a floor mosaic, where the image and any accompanying narrative are deployed at right angles to the standing viewer.”¹⁷⁶ What makes the Orpheus mosaic especially perplexing is the way in which it simultaneously enables at least two seemingly incongruous ways of seeing the figures contained within its frame: on the one hand, the figures of Orpheus and Eurydice, situated in a more or less determinate place at the “top” of the mosaic articulated by the iterated groundline that connects to the gate or threshold of Hades; on the other, the damned souls ranged across the expanse of a space-drained white field, floating and utterly unanchored in a zone of bounded vacuity.

Yet what happens if, instead of imaging the mosaic as if it were a picture vertically affixed to the wall (bearing in mind that published photographs of mosaics in books implicitly tend to solicit affordances of “top” and “bottom” at strict ninety-degree angles, the caveat that mosaics are not “paintings in stone” notwithstanding), we attend to the necessarily oblique affordances that floor mosaics present to their upright beholders?¹⁷⁷ When digitally rotated so that the mosaic presents a topological transformation that more closely approaches the foreshortened axis of observation from which one sees it in its environment, a number of intriguing details come into view (fig. 2.15).¹⁷⁸ For example, the two trees situated on the groundline to the right of Orpheus appear to recede in the virtualized space of the picture not only because they are smaller in scale compared to the one next to Tantalus, but also because of their attendant foreshortening in visual space; now they exist not at the “top” of the mosaic, but rather its lateral extension. By contrast, the larger tree in the front appears to rise up toward the approaching beholder by virtue of a key detail: the contingency of the base of its trunk on a groundline that

is coextensive with the frame of the picture itself. The effect of this peculiar detail is that the groundline gives way to a groundplane that merges the visual space of the beholder with the virtual space of the picture.

In any other context, perhaps, such claims might seem extravagant, but in the end the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is a story that is precisely *about* limits—limits of space, of movement, and of vision and visibility itself—in which the beholder is ineluctably implicated. Even the frame of the mosaic, far from adding mere frippery to the picture, constitutes the very stakes of the myth and its re-enactment. To step over the black line from which the larger tree grows is thus to step over the threshold of the Underworld that Ovid had described as a frame or “margin” with all its literary and pictorial associations—*telluris margine summae*, “the margin of the upper earth”—past the watchful gaze of Cerberus in a mirror reversal of the threshold depicted at the opposite end of the space. Notwithstanding the regrettable lack of archaeological context for the mosaic and the various cues its architectural setting might have furnished for the beholder, it seems that bodily awareness *itself* might constitute the central theme of the mosaic and its imagery of corporal punishment and frustrated desire—a twofold awareness of both one’s own proprioceptive input in the darkened confines of the sepulchral chamber and the body of the deceased who had been laid to rest there.



Plate 1.1 White-ground lekythos, attributed to the Achilles Painter, 440–435 BCE. Athens. Ceramic. 1989.281.72, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Art Resource, NY.

Plate 1.2 Nekyia scene (detail of the ghosts of Agamemnon and Tiresias), 325–300 BCE. Tomb of Orcus II, Tarquinia.





Plate 1.3 Funerary shroud from Saqqara, mid-first century CE. Painted linen. 4229/I Ia 5749. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Plate 1.4 Funerary shroud from Saqqara (detail), mid-first century CE. Painted linen. 4229/I Ia 5749. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Plate 1.5 Ba and shadow from the Tomb of Irinifer, west of Thebes, ca. 1250 BCE. Wall-painting. Photo: Art Resource, NY.



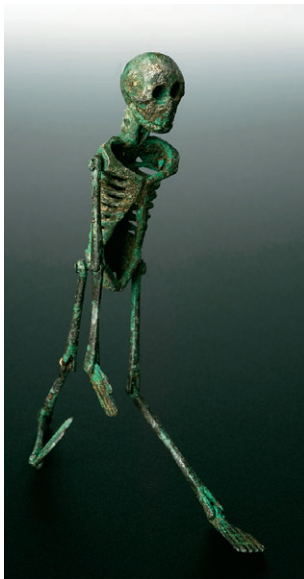


Plate 1.6 Bronze miniature skeleton (*larva*), 25 BCE–100 CE. © Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library, all rights reserved.

Plate 1.7 The ghost of Clytemnestra attempts to rouse the Furies, fourth century BCE, attributed to the Eumenides Painter. Ceramic, red figure. Apulia. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 2.1 Floor mosaic depicting Orpheus and Eurydice in the Underworld. Photo: Courtesy of a New York collector.



Plate 2.2 Odysseus landscapes (detail of the Underworld scenes), ca. mid-first century BCE. Wall-painting from the Esquiline, Rome. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican Museums. Photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY.





Plate 2.3 Vue d'optique print, representing the descent of Aeneas into the Underworld, with the palace of Pluto in the distance, ca. 1758–1761. Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 2.4 Odysseus consulting the ghost of Tiresias, fourth century BCE, attributed to the Dolon painter. Ceramic, red figure. Lucania. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Photo: © BnF, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 2.5 Interior view of Tomb I, Vatican Necropolis. Photo: By kind permission of the Fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano.

Plate 2.6 Orpheus and Eurydice in the Underworld, Tomb of D. Folius Mela, second century CE. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican. Photo: © DeA Picture Library/Art Resource, NY.

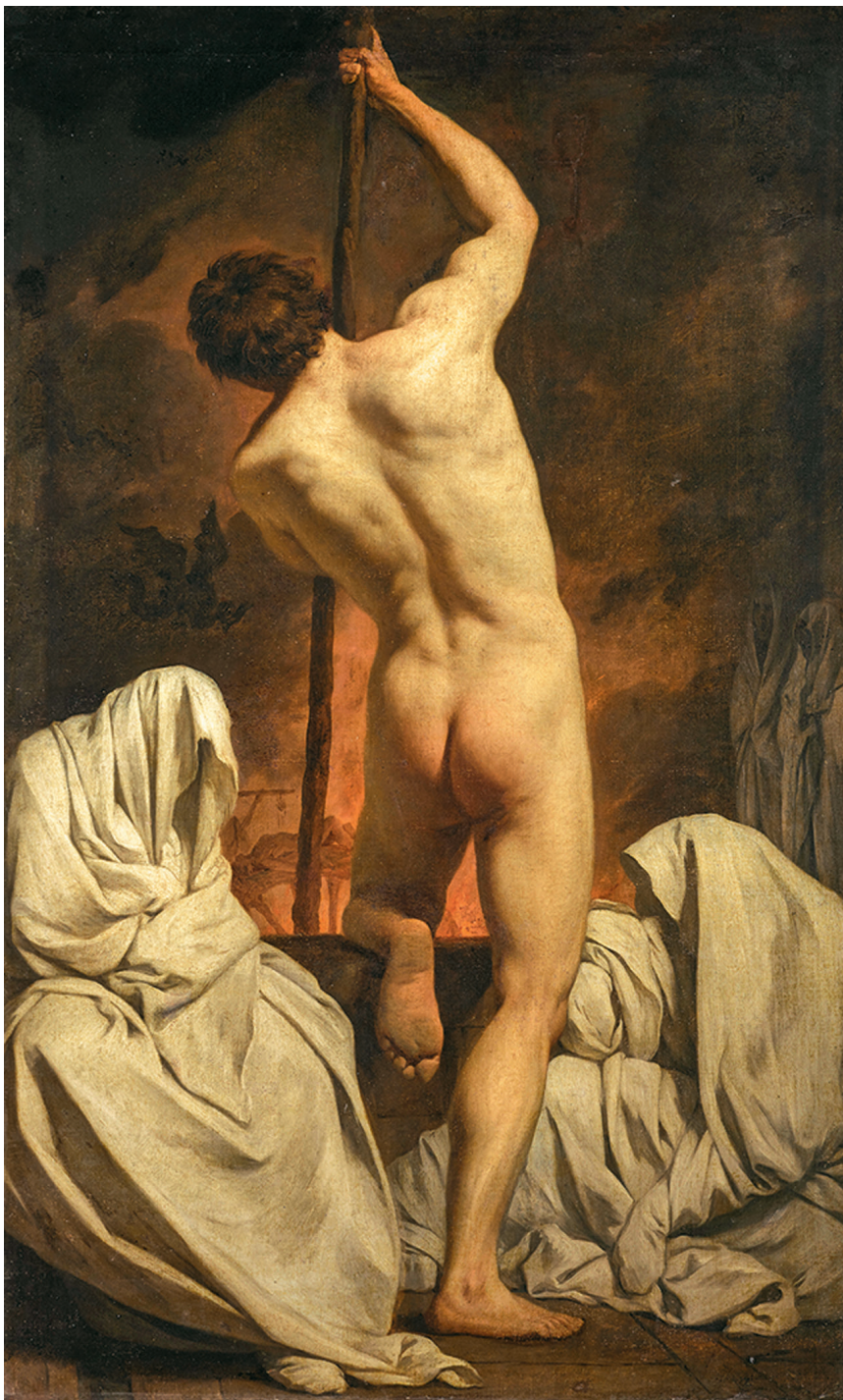


Plate 3.1 Pierre Subleyras, *Charon passant les ombes*, ca. 1735. Oil on canvas, 135 x 83 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.



Plate 3.2 Sacrifice of Iphigenia (detail of Agamemnon), after 62 CE. House of the Tragic Poet Pompeii, 6.8.3. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Photo: Author.





Plate 3.3 Couple embracing on a bridal bed, Myrina tomb 100, second century BCE. Terracotta. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 4.1 Caravaggio, *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, 1601–1602. Oil on canvas, 107 x 146 cm. Potsdam: Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg. Photo: Hans Bach.

Plate 4.2 Sarcophagus (detail showing Doubting Thomas), ca. mid-fourth century CE. African onyx. Museo di Santa Giulia, Brescia. Photo: Author.



Plate 4.3 Mosaic depicting the Incredulity of Saint Thomas (detail), sixth century CE. S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. Photo: Alfredo Dagli Orti/Art Resource, NY.

Plate 4.4 Detail of a torso fragment of the terracotta Amazon from the Esquiline, early fifth century BCE. Musei Capitolini, Rome. Photo: Author.

Plate 4.5 Statue of a Wounded Amazon (“Sciarrà” type), first or second century CE. Marble. Ēcija: Museo Histórico Municipal. Photo: Carole Raddato.

Plate 4.6 Papyrus fragment likely depicting the embrace between Achilles and the ghost of Patroclus (*Iliad* 23.64ff). P.OxyXLII 3001. Photo: Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society and the University of Oxford Imaging Papyri Project.

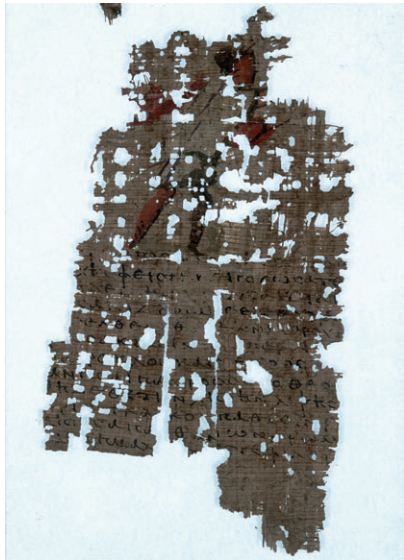




Plate 4.7 The ghost of Hector appearing to Aeneas in a dream, Vatican Vergil codex, Folio 19v (Vat. Lat. 3225). Photo: © 2019 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.

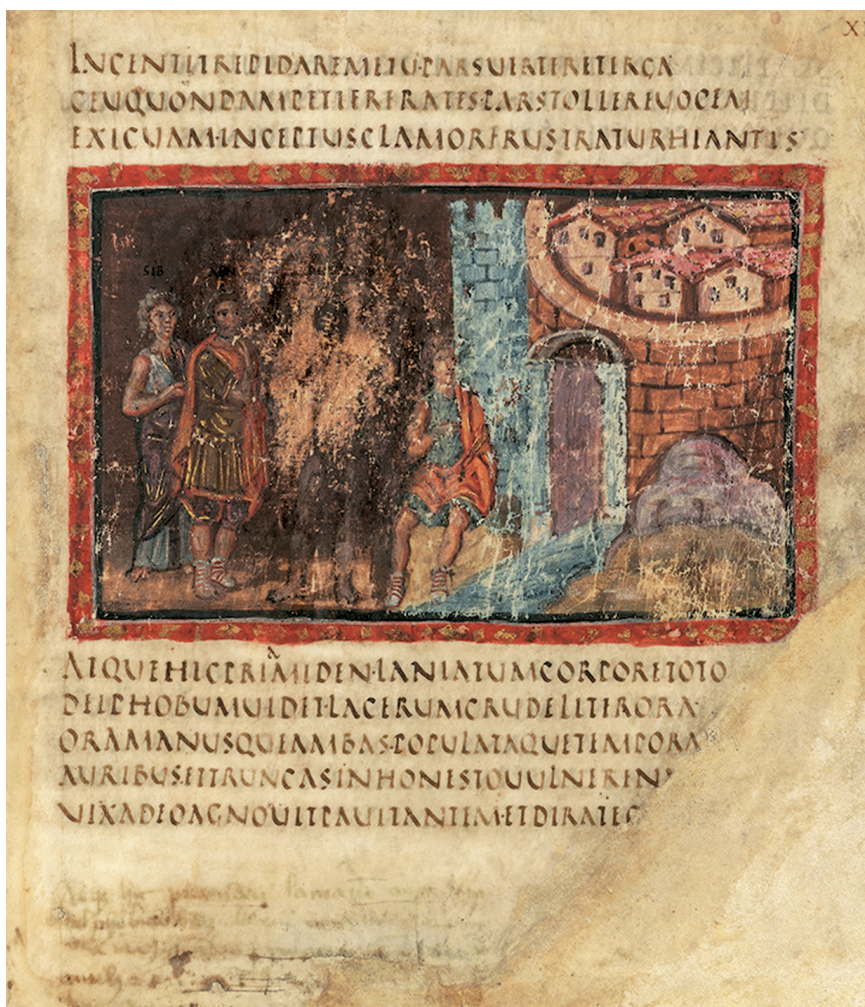


Plate 4.8 Aeneas and the Sibyl meet the ghost of Deiphobus, Vatican Vergil codex, Folio 49r (Vat. Lat. 3225). Photo: © 2019 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.

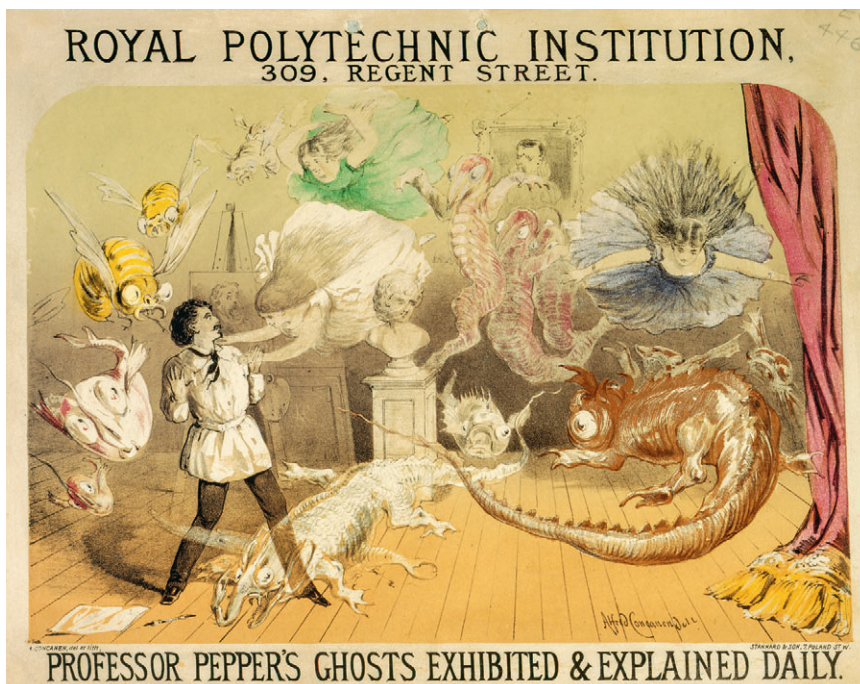


Plate E.1 Poster advertisement, "Professor Pepper's ghosts exhibited & explained daily," 1885 (?).
Photo: © The British Library Board, Evan.446.

Chapter Three

SPECTRAL SUBJECTIVITY

On the one hand you do not doubt the existence of spirits of the male sex, while on the other hand you doubt the existence of any of the female sex. This seems to me more like caprice than general doubt, for if this were really your opinion, it would be more in keeping with the popular imagination which makes God masculine rather than feminine. I am surprised that those who have seen naked spirits have not cast their eyes on the genital parts; perhaps they were too afraid, or ignorant of the difference.

BARUCH SPINOZA, *Letter to Hugo Boxel* (1674)

Traditionally in Western art, ghosts are depicted as deeply veiled or shrouded figures whose form and visage are obscured within the pleats and folds of voluminous swathes of fabric. In some cases, as Michael Baxandall observed in his account of Pierre Subleyras's sensuous *Caron passant les ombres* of 1746 (plate 3.1), the shrouded ghost may resemble little more than a virtuoso drapery study in which the presence of the spectral body is paradoxically figured by its cancellation or evacuation from the scene.¹ For Baxandall, Subleyras's picture thus encourages the beholder to make a series of logical inferences about the forms of the shrouded ghosts based on

Enlightenment ideas about shadows and the information they convey. Whereas the outline of Charon alone would be enough to distinguish him as a man, he argues, the figures of the ghosts constitute a more ambiguous case that depends on our “perception of the fabric’s detail topography.”² Thankfully, as Baxandall assures us, the uncertainty surrounding the precise nature and identity of these figures need not be too distressing, for “shrouded souls are not a normal case.”³

Neither were they a normal case in antiquity. But that does not mean that they were not there, or that as exceptions to the rule they are not helpful in revealing more about what that “rule” is exactly, and how it came to be shaped by salient historical circumstances and intentionalities. This of course was precisely Baxandall’s point, and it is one I take for granted in this chapter, which explores the iconography of the shrouded ghost in a limited corpus of Roman mythological sarcophagi. In addition to thinking about the epistemological status of the shroud and its detail topography within an ancient visual culture, I investigate some of the ways in which this iconography was constituted as a profoundly gendered problem of subjectivity, and more specifically as a question of the gaze. At the same time, I wish to avoid any suggestion of treating these topics as exclusively visual problems at the expense of their *ethical* dimensions that were likewise embedded within a social matrix of desires, temporalities, and richer forms and textures of embodiment.

In a nutshell, my argument is that the shroud, far from conforming to a conventional ghostly iconography, introduced a new way of depicting the ghost by effectively turning it inside out. In other words, the metaphors of the shroud as a cover helped externalize and hence make visible the psychological and ethical conditions—chief among them the sense of shame (expressed in the Greek and Latin terms *aidōs* and *pudor*, respectively)—that are correlatively internal and hence invisible in nature. While there is nothing that intrinsically links the figure of the ghost to the ethical dimensions of shame, it is striking that the iconography of the shrouded ghost appears to emerge in relation to a limited group of mythological protagonists gathered here in this chapter who were invoked as a point of reference to the experiences of the deceased and bereaved alike. What they share in common, I argue, is an economy of sorrow, grief, and mourning that were intimately bound up in scopic regimes of *self-seeing*.⁴

While there exist a number of subtle and meaningful distinctions between the Greek and Roman understanding and experience of these ethical concepts, to say nothing of the complexity of each in the context of its own culture and history of usage, both share an overarching emphasis on the regard for oneself with respect to another.⁵ Although usually rendered simply as “shame” or “modesty,” the semantic range and nuance of these lexical items that so often elude modern translations were sufficiently complex to warrant further explanation and context even among the ancients themselves. Certain words in English such as “regard” and “respect,” how-

ever, may go a long way in helping address the profoundly social aspect of this range of experiences that were broadly understood to be constitutively visual in nature.

While the past twenty years of classical scholarship has witnessed an explosion of interest in the social dynamics of these concepts, Karl Kerényi's early account in his landmark study of Greek and Roman religion (1940) remains fresh for the way it succinctly captures, in a sort of anticipation of both Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic treatments, how the visibility of shame poses an existential threat: "Thus in the phenomenon of *aidōs* a key situation of Greek religious experience is formed by the union of corresponding active and passive elements, seer and vision, viewer and viewed, a watched and watchful world."⁶ Citing Kerényi in a brief historiographical aside on the modern understanding of shame through its ancient genealogy, Giorgio Agamben provides a provisional yet useful definition of shame as a kind of visual reciprocity in which "whoever experiences shame is overcome by his own being subject to vision; he must respond to what deprives him of speech."⁷ What is at stake here, Agamben argues, is nothing less than the very ground of subjectivity itself: "In shame, the subject thus has no other content than its own desubjectification; it becomes witness to its own disorder, its own oblivion as a subject. This double movement, which is both subjectification and desubjectification, is shame."⁸

Building on Agamben's modern account of the destabilizing effects of shame via its ancient formulations, I'd like to suggest that the shrouded ghost is in many ways the visual manifestation of shame par excellence. Oscillating between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, even life and death, the ghost enveloped within a shroud can see without being seen as it chooses, yet its *sensitivity* to being seen, its shamefastness, keeps it in check. The shroud signifies the existential instability of the ghostly figure that produces by and for itself a scotomizing effect or blind spot within the field of vision (that is, the place from which we see and are seen simultaneously) in which the ghost as a subject becomes annihilated or elided in the dynamics of the gaze.⁹ At the same time, it produces a reciprocal, if asymmetrical, blind spot for the person who *does* see the ghost that works paradoxically to render visible the very impossibility of looking at death, and the powers that belong to it, face to face.

If the link I am suggesting between the ghostly shroud and the visibility of shame is new, it is one that has a significant and more commonplace parallel in the ancient associations between drapery and *aidōs*, which could be worn as a kind of covering and shield from the gaze. As Gloria Pinney has shown using both textual and visual forms of evidence, the ancients often likened the quality of shamefastness not only to a psychological or physiological response (such as blushing), but also to the peculiar phenomenology of a garment that both constrains and conceals a body underneath or a veil that is raised up protectively over one's features.¹⁰ As a

metaphorical covering that both conceals and prevents movement, Pinney argues, *aidōs* “keeps under control those who are incapable of exercising agency—by nature, females, children, and slaves—and prevents men who have power from using it in a destructive manner.”¹¹ But if shame is a covering, then the corollary would be that to disrobe and be naked is to feel no sense of shame whatsoever (unless of course one thinks one is alone, but then again maybe isn’t—hence the titillating and undecidable gesture of the Knidian Aphrodite which, as Lucian famously remarked, was completely naked save for her right hand that covered up her *aidōs*, thus conflating her shame and genitalia).¹²

But if shame was in the eye of the beholder, it was also in the eye of the beheld. Anticipating John Berger’s classic distinction between the aesthetic categories of the “naked” and the “nude,” Plutarch contends in his *Advice to the Bride and Groom* that “Herodotus was not right in saying that a woman lays aside her modesty along with her undergarment. On the contrary, a virtuous woman puts on modesty in its stead, and husband and wife bring into their mutual relations the greatest modesty as a token of the greatest love.”¹³ So intensely surveilled was this quality that it had already become a cliché in antiquity, having passed into a proverb quoted by Stobaeus in his fifth-century anthology of proverbs: “*Aidōs* dwells upon the eyelids of sensitive people.”¹⁴ Like a garment worn over the body, a veil drawn over the face, or even a hand cupped over the genitals, the eyelids supply a natural, makeshift covering of flesh that marks the burden of shame they carry as an irreducibly ocular and gendered mode of social interaction.

The argument of this chapter unfolds in a series of three case studies of Roman mythological sarcophagi depicting the myths of Orestes, Alcestis, and Protesilaus. Myth, I hope to show, is hardly an incidental or contingent feature of this iconography. It rather constitutes it, carving out a space in the imagery that Björn Ewald, drawing on psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy and role-play, has provocatively called a “fantasmatic support” that provides “not just a means of sublimating certain experiences, but a necessary fiction . . . which enabled or at the very least intensified these same experiences.”¹⁵ As we shall see, these myths, and the sarcophagi that depict them, do not simply repeat the same iconography with a difference. Each sarcophagus mobilizes the shrouded ghost in a different way to signify and transpose into the world of myth the emotional structure of mourning.

Each of the caskets examined here has been selected because of its exceptional, rather than exemplary, value in relation to a larger corpus of material. That the iconography of the shrouded ghost was *not* a commonplace until the Middle Ages—and even there for potentially very different reasons—is precisely what makes these early and rare instances in which it does appear of intrinsic art-historical interest.¹⁶ My point, therefore, has little to do with an attempt to demonstrate the sheer antiquity, let alone popularity, of this iconography. Rather, my aim is to show how the



Fig. 3.1 Orestes sarcophagus, ca. 130–140 CE. Marble. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican.
Photo: DAI Inst. Neg. FA-S5709-01.

figure of the shrouded ghost was inscribed within an ideology of mourning in the Roman world that shaped the very ground of subjectivity and gendered semiosis. At the same time, and in a reciprocal fashion, I want to show how the very constitution of such an ideology was predicated not only on what it meant to be haunted by ghosts, but also on the possibility of imagining oneself in the destabilizing subject position *as* a ghost.

AGAMEMNON'S "SHACKLES NOT OF BRONZE"

Given that the ghost of Agamemnon never explicitly appears, let alone speaks, in any extant version of the *Oresteia*—whether in those of any of the great Greek tragedians such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, or even in later Roman ones by Seneca and others—it might come as some surprise that it features so prominently on a late Hadrianic Orestes sarcophagus now in the Museo Gregoriano Profano at the Vatican (fig. 3.1).¹⁷ Enveloped within a heavy cocoon of cloth, the ghost looms under an arched gateway that alludes both to the tomb of the slaughtered king and to the entrance to Hades (fig. 3.2). As in the beginning of Aeschylus's *Libation Bearers*, the tomb constitutes the site at which Orestes resolves to avenge the murder of his father—a resolve whose consequences are borne out in a series of episodic scenes depicted in continuous narrative across the front panel of the casket: the revenge killing of his treacherous mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aigisthus; the psychological torment inflicted by the Furies who trail behind in hot pursuit; and finally the attempted expiation of his blood-crime at the temple of Apollo who, having encouraged Orestes to kill his mother in the first place, shares some portion



Fig. 3.2 Orestes sarcophagus (detail of Agamemnon's tomb), ca. 130–140 CE. Marble.
Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican. Photo: Author.

of the hero's culpability. Here, unlike in the tragedy, it is evidently not so much the tomb as the *ghost* of Agamemnon whose appearance immediately calls Orestes to action and sets him on the path to his bloody destiny.

Significantly, the Orestes sarcophagus in the Vatican, originally discovered in situ along with two other sarcophagi in the so-called "Tomba della Medusa" in Rome in 1839, is in fact the *only* extant example among some twenty-nine Orestes sarcophagi to show the ghost of Agamemnon. Perhaps as a consequence of its seemingly anomalous character, precious little has been said about the iconography of the ghost itself and about its presentation within the narrative logic of the sculpted scenes. An important exception is the study of Ruth Bielfeldt, whose attention to the programmatic assemblage of the sarcophagi in the sepulchral context has stressed the links between the family dynamics of the *Oresteia* (particularly in relation to the lid of the casket, which touches on themes from Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris*) and those of the bereaved family members who must have gathered in the tomb on special days of remembrance.¹⁸ With regard to the apparition of Agamemnon's ghost at the tomb, Bielfeldt provocatively suggests that the viewers of the sarcophagus could have identified with Orestes and Pylades in the sense that they, too, were enacting a similar encounter between the living and the dead. The depicted tomb on the casket and the sepulchral space in which it was placed were thus implicated in a circular and mutually reinforcing fashion.

For present purposes, however, I wish to set aside all of these rich connections, important as they are, in order to focus on the iconography of the shrouded ghost of Agamemnon that sets all of the narrative plot into motion. As natural as it might seem that a ghost would appear at his tomb in the burial dress of a shroud or winding sheet, it is curious that Agamemnon would appear in this way, given his complaints to Odysseus in the Underworld that Clytemnestra didn't even have the decency to close his eyes or fix his jaw shut after she had brutally dispatched him.¹⁹ Its appearance here, I suggest, does far more than simply signal that Agamemnon has returned from the grave; rather, it makes visibly and materially manifest the *aidōs* that renders him "incapable of exercising agency" (or, in this case, blood vengeance) on his own, forcing him to seek it on behalf of his son. If, as Bielfeldt argues, the Tomba della Medusa in some sense prescribed or shaped the viewer's reception of the Orestes casket, then it seems that a greater attention to the iconography of the shroud—and by extension that of *aidōs*—has the potential to enrich the social basis of the encounter between the bereaved and the deceased and their mythological counterparts.

As we shall see, Agamemnon constitutes a rather ideal limit case for such a depictive strategy given the fact that his *aidōs* plays a key role at two pivotal points in the *Oresteia*: first, as a shameful emotion attached to his grief-stricken compulsion to sacrifice his own daughter Iphigenia, bound up in a tangle of her own robes like

an animal taken for slaughter, for the sake of winning the Trojan War (the capital sin, aside from his keeping of the prophetess Cassandra as a concubine, that led Clytemnestra to seek her murderous revenge); and second, in the violent struggle of his own murder at the hand of his wife and her lover who ensnared and stabbed him through a mass of thick robes that, like a hunting net, trapped him just as he did Iphigenia.²⁰ Taking these in reverse order, I also try to stress the way in which, given the status he enjoys as an adult male subject for whom *aidōs* ideally operates as an *occurrent*, rather than a *dispositional* emotion, Agamemnon affords a unique case for exploring the destabilizing effects of *aidōs* that the shrouded ghost wears on its sleeve. To draw a somewhat crude distinction between these kinds of emotion, one could say that occurrent emotions indicate the experience of an emotion in a given moment, whereas dispositional emotions designate a tendency or potential to experience them.²¹

Scarcely visible within a voluminous hood, the ghostly visage of Agamemnon is characterized chiefly by the archaizing beard that gives him away both to the viewer and to Orestes alongside his lookalike companion Pylades, whose gestures signal both their surprise and their immediate recognition of the slain king. Framed by narrow pockets of deep relief that throw it into partial, suggestive darkness, the face of Agamemnon must have been animated in the tomb by the phantasmagorical play of sputtering lamplight that would have cast flickering shadows from above and also across the modulating surface of the stone casket, set low to the ground on a pair of stumpy plinths.²² The perceptual and instability of this ghostly vision, oscillating between light and shadow, presence and absence, is further intensified by the presence of the Fury who lies in a sleepy stupor at the side of the tomb. Like the Eumenides painter's depiction of Clytemnestra waking the sleeping Furies by touching one of their heads with her hand, Orestes's own hand, at the same time that it appears as a gesture of supplication to the ghost of his father, suggestively hovers above the head of the sleeping Fury as if to rouse her from her languor and rally her to vengeance. In doing so, it both generates and responds to a spectral co-presence that introduces a troubling indeterminacy regarding the seen and the unseen in this tangled network of glances and modes of (un)consciousness.

In order to clarify the ethical stakes of recognition that depend on the reciprocity of seeing and being seen, I wish to draw attention briefly to a scene that bears a striking resemblance to the encounter between Orestes and the ghost of Agamemnon in the opening pages of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Naturally, Derrida draws from the opening act and scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in which the ghost of the eponymous prince's father appears to a pair of soldiers and a visitor named Horatio. Drawing their swords in fear, the soldiers implore Horatio in his capacity as a scholar to speak to the ghost and to learn what it wants. As Horatio later reports back to Hamlet, the apparition was dressed from head to toe in a suit

of armor, prompting the prince to interject and voice his concern that none of the eyewitnesses got a good look at his father's face. Not so, Horatio explains, for he was able to recognize the ghost as the dead king by virtue of the fact that "he wore his Beaver (visor) up."

From this classic scene of Shakespearean theater, Derrida develops a concept of the specter whose very etymology points to its problematic visibility:²³

A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the *visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us. . . . The armor may be but the body of a real artifact, a kind of technical prosthesis, a body foreign to the spectral body that it dresses, dissimulates, and protects, masking even its identity. The armor lets one see nothing of the spectral body, but at the level of the head and *beneath the visor*, it permits the so-called father to see and to speak. Some slits are cut into it and adjusted so as to permit him to see without being seen, but to speak in order to be heard.

And yet, as Derrida goes on to suggest, it is not only the visor, but also the helmet, that produces an effect that likewise disrupts any possible exchange of glances. "For the helmet effect," Derrida asserts, "it suffices that a visor be *possible* and that one play with it. Even when it is raised, *in fact*, its possibility continues to signify that someone, beneath the armor, can safely see without being seen or without being identified."²⁴ Derrida's reading of *Hamlet* is useful here in that it suggests how the materiality of the ghostly costume discloses a general principle of the spectral look as both an iconographic convention and a phenomenological event, or an effect of the gaze.

Certain aspects of Derrida's concept of the visor/helmet effect offer a provocative model with which to compare the iconography of Agamemnon's shroud and the shrouded ghost in antiquity more generally, particularly with regard to his emphasis on the latent power of its effect even when the visor is raised. Yet, whereas Derrida repeatedly draws on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, specifically the ethics of "face-to-face" contact in order to cast the ghost as a kind of unknowable "Other" that destabilizes any reciprocity of the gaze according to our own body set, my aim here is rather to invert the emphasis on who is doing the looking and who is feeling the look.²⁵ In this sense, my interest perhaps corresponds to what a feminist lens might regard as the gendered "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the ghost, to borrow Laura Mulvey's term, but which the ancients might simply have called its *aidōs* or *pudor*.²⁶ Indeed, while it has always been customary to focus on the experience of the ghost-seer (as in the case of Hamlet), rather than that of the ghost being seen, or more precisely its sensitivity to seeing itself being seen, my objective here is to do precisely that.

In the case of Agamemnon, as I have already indicated, these conditions are strongly linked to the sense of *aidōs* that haunted him at two crucial points in *Oresteia*. On the Vatican sarcophagus, the *aidōs* of Agamemnon's ghost is depicted chiefly through the metaphors of bodily restraint, swaddled as he is in a thick encasement of fabric that constricts his posture and movement. Adding to this sense of restraint and immobility is the fact that his hands are held fast underneath the shroud in a way that gives the whole of his figure a kind of statuesque, deathly rigor. Perhaps most evident of all, thanks to the drapery of the hood that makes it visible, is the way in which Agamemnon's head is forcibly downcast. In contradistinction to Orestes, who lifts his head up in a kind of gobsmacked wonder, Agamemnon can only lift his gaze above his lowered head to meet that of his son.²⁷

All of these techniques for constraining the body are emphatically gendered. Although they are commonly visible among young maidens in scenes of marriage, this kind of physical and visual restriction of the body is almost without parallel for men (especially those of such high status). One possibility is that Agamemnon's shroud either represents or at least alludes to the fateful robes with which Clytemnestra had ensnared her husband as her adulterer, Aigisthus, struck the fatal blow. These robes, the very same ones the Furies later unfurled over the slain bodies of Clytemnestra and Aigisthus on the opposite end of the sarcophagus, are explicitly invoked in the *Libation Bearers* when Electra mournfully addresses her father at his tomb, pitying his sad fate in which he was "trapped like a beast in shackles not of bronze."²⁸ While it has often been observed that there exists a kind of tragic symmetry between the death of Agamemnon and his sacrifice of Iphigenia, Pinney has drawn attention to the gendered dynamics that constitute the metaphorical dimension of *aidōs* as a cover. Hence, as she observes, "Like a woman, Agamemnon is enmeshed in cloth, caught, as it were, in a foul kind of *aidōs*."²⁹

If such a reading is feasible, it is important to stress just how insistently the shroud *occludes* the spectral body contained inside it. Compare, for example, a red-figure calyx-krater in Boston (ca. 460 BCE) that depicts the gruesome murder of Agamemnon (fig. 3.3).³⁰ Despite the fact that the king's body is trapped within the deadly swathes of fabric that are in turn covered all over with a spangled embroidery, the robes admit a horrifyingly diaphanous view of the wounded body beneath where a gaping gash directly under the breast stains both body and garment alike. Indeed, there is a dense and complex interplay and even confounding between surface and depth, exteriority and interiority. Notice, for instance, how the embroidered pattern occupies the same continuous surface of the robe and its formal topography, thus blurring the definitions of volume and contour in a pictorial effect of spatial flattening. More powerful still is the emphatic likening of the rivulets of blood pouring out of the wound to the scraggly tendrils of the beard, thus reinforc-

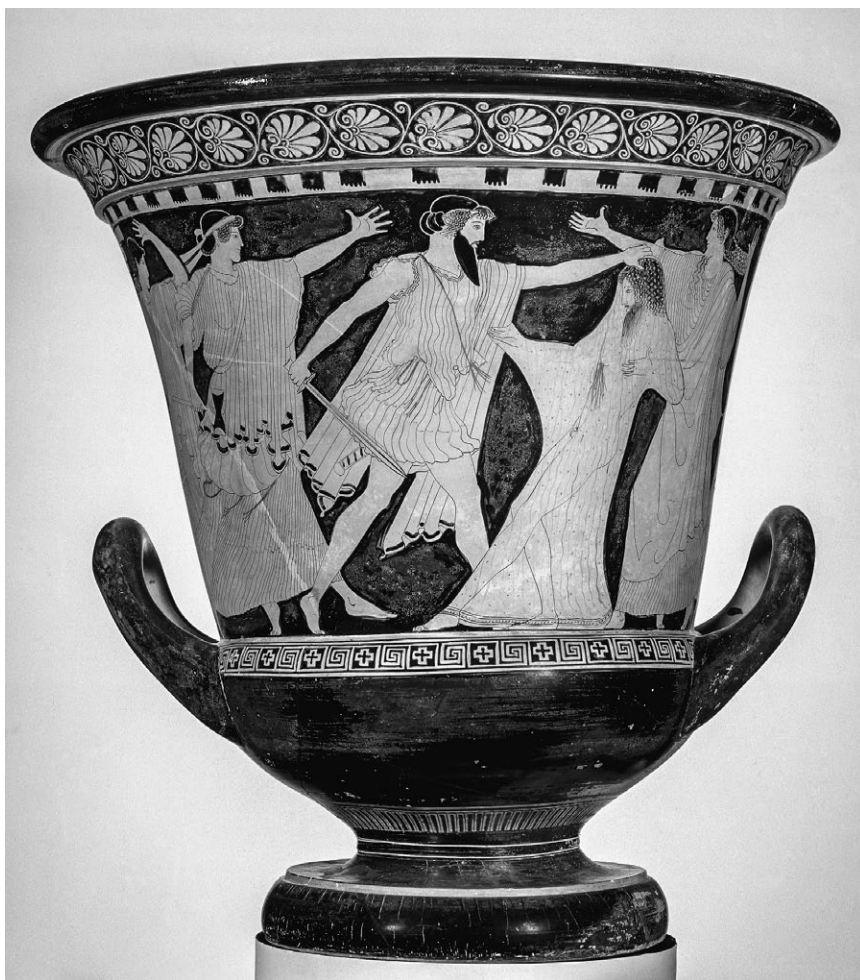


Fig. 3.3 Calyx-krater depicting the murder of Agamemnon, Dokimasia Painter, ca. 460 BCE. Ceramic, red-figure. Athens. Photo: © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 63.1246, William Francis Warden Fund.

ing through the corporeal matter of blood and hair the relationship between the inside and the outside of the body itself. Finally, it is important that the very contours of the robes are at once defined and undone by the limbs of Agamemnon on the one hand and his destabilizing stance on the other. Indeed, the robes appear to *stick* to the king as though he were trapped in a mass of glue or tar. On the Vatican sarcophagus, by contrast, the shroud clings tightly, but not *too* tightly, to Agamemnon, serving only as a kind of envelope or container for the spectral body that we

are forced to imagine or infer underneath. Here, Agamemnon's *aidōs* is made visible not through an appeal to its transparency, but rather, and somewhat paradoxically, by its very opacity.³¹

How to account for the change between these two depictive strategies? And how can it be that the opacity of Agamemnon's ghost is precisely what makes his psychological condition visible? Without claiming that the shroud and the robes in which Agamemnon was murdered are necessarily the same thing, I want to stress that there does seem to be an intentional indeterminacy in which the two are mutually implicated. What drives this indeterminacy, I suggest, is an artistic tradition that can be traced back to a famous painting of Agamemnon and the sacrifice of Iphigenia by the fourth-century Greek painter Timanthes, who was praised for its conceptual ingenuity by a number of later Roman authors, including Cicero, Pliny, and Quintilian.

A wall painting depicting this subject in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii, even if it is unlikely to be a precise copy of Timanthes's picture, nonetheless includes a number of key features described by the authors mentioned above (plate 3.2).³² The rationale for this connection typically centers on Agamemnon's veil, which famously obscured Agamemnon's face from the beholder's gaze. As Pliny attests, and as we know from the extant writings of Cicero and Quintilian, orators praised this detail for the sheer audacity of its invention.³³ For Cicero, the veil was an exemplary display of artistic decorum and restraint in the sense that it acknowledged that the profundity of Agamemnon's emotion could not be adequately portrayed (literally "imitated") with the painter's brush (*luctum penicillo non posset imitari*).³⁴ Quintilian likewise invoked Timanthes in order to stress the rhetorical principle of *decorum* or appropriateness, suggesting that the painter "found he had used up all his means of representing emotion and could discover no way of adequately portraying her father's face (. . . *non reperiens quo digne modo patris vultum posset exprimere*); so he covered his head in a veil, and left it to the imagination of the spectators."³⁵

Such a (non)display of emotion must have evoked the symptoms of *aidōs* (e.g., his downturned head and concealing mantle) that would have been appropriate to a grieving father, as seen on later Roman sarcophagi. What Timanthes's treatment of Agamemnon's veil brings to the fore is a more precise sense of what constitutes an iconography not of the veil as such, but rather an iconography of its metaphoric potential, namely the slippage between transparency and opacity, visibility and invisibility. But how exactly does this work? One possibility, as Verity Platt has recently argued, is that the picture functions like a rhetorical mechanism whose figurative potential, whether through verbal or gestural means, is a necessary precondition for persuasive speech. Hence, as Platt elegantly puts it, "Timanthes uses the *logos* of painting to build the *pathos* of spectators into the *ēthos* of the painter's

own command—transforming what was apparently his inability to represent Agamemnon's grief into a brilliant opening for the *pathos* of the viewer to construct his or her own imagined suffering beneath the veil, as it were."³⁶

Having exhausted his pictorial arsenal of emotional schemata, Timanthes thus had to resort to other, less conventional means of suggesting the depth of Agamemnon's sorrow. The ancient responses to Agamemnon's emotionality may have signaled a rather different mode of visual representation in the Greek concept of *phantasia*.³⁷ If the domain of mimesis is located in the representational faculty of imitation and its psychological effects, *phantasia* operates at the rather more abstract level of what is normally translated simply as "imagination."³⁸ The distinction between mimesis and *phantasia* is complex, but roughly speaking it involves a conceptual separation between what is given to be seen in the world and what is seen as a visual impression in the mind's eye, so to speak.³⁹ By depicting Agamemnon under a heavy mantle, Timanthes was encouraging the beholder to picture for themselves not only the king's psychological state of mind, but also, I'd like to suggest, his *aidōs*, or his sensitivity to being seen in this way. As a result, *phantasia* and *aidōs*—related concepts for Aristotle, not coincidentally—are therefore not just mutually implicated; *aidōs* and the veil that constitutes its metaphoric potency provide the outwardly visible symptoms of an internalized, hence invisible depth of emotion that in turn generates and sustains the *phantasia*. Moreover, it allows Agamemnon's emotions to include *aidōs* as well.

There is yet another way to account for Timanthes's depictive challenge that also keys into some of the cultural differences that are implicit in the Roman reception of this Greek painter and his picture of several centuries past. Specifically, I would like to draw attention to the language that Quintilian uses to describe Timanthes's dilemma, namely that he "could discover no way of adequately *portraying her father's face*" (*vultum posset exprimere*).⁴⁰ While the sense of *exprimere* here clearly has to do with depicting Agamemnon's visage, the combination with *vultum* points to the Roman fascination with the face and its range of expressions. This notion of expression can be taken in a literal sense as when, for example, Pliny describes the famous wax ancestor masks of aristocratic families as *expressi cera vultus*, "faces expressed [from plaster molds] in wax."⁴¹ But in a more subtly metaphorical, yet related, sense, as Cicero explained, it captures a uniquely Roman concept: "[Nature] has so formed man's features as to portray therein the character that lies hidden deep within him; for not only do the eyes declare with exceeding clearness the feelings of our hearts, but also the *vultus*, as we Romans call it, which can be found in no living thing save man, reveals the character: the Greeks are familiar with the meaning which this word *vultus* conveys, but they have no word for it."⁴² Unlike the Greeks, for whom the face, like a mask (both were denoted by the same term, *prosōpon*), constituted a largely exterior set of visible phenomena, the Romans were

likewise interested in the interior, hence invisible, mesh of mental and moral activity that remained hidden underneath its fleshy surface. Implicitly, then, the Roman preoccupation with the *exemplum* of Timanthes's pictorial solution, especially as it pertains to the relations between painting and rhetoric, may have something to do with the nature of emotionality, the interplay of exteriority and interiority, and the work of figurability itself that somehow gets lost in translation.

Returning to the sarcophagus, Agamemnon's shroud presents a certain structural similarity to Timanthes's use of the veil in that it, too, provides a kind of path to *phantasia* in its concealment of the ghostly body and the gruesome wounds we are led to imagine underneath. Of course, it's important to acknowledge that unlike the veiled figure in Timanthes's picture, the shrouded ghost of Agamemnon *does* have a partially exposed face. Its visibility may be problematic, but it is still constitutively visible for all that. The two depictions of Agamemnon can be distinguished from each other not in terms of one signifying *aidōs* and not the other, but rather in terms of the mode or form that *aidōs* takes. In the painting of Timanthes, the *aidōs* of Agamemnon is occurrent: he draws his mantle as a response to the grief and the shame he feels with respect to Iphigenia and the fate to which he condemns her. That being said, the depiction of Agamemnon's hand in this painting seems emphatically gendered with respect to the lightness of the skin, the delicate gesticulation of the fingers, and the apparent lack of muscular definition in the forearm. It is an iconography of both corporeal and emotional *softness*. On the sarcophagus, by contrast, the *aidōs* of Agamemnon is dispositional: the encasing shroud conveys the imposition of bodily constraints and the destabilizing, asymmetrical subjectivity that sets him apart from the world of the living.

But if dispositional *aidōs* is typically attributed to women rather than men (given that the practice of covering the head was normatively observed by modest women and only in exceptional circumstances, such as during sacrifice or mourning, by men), then it seems the shrouded ghost has the potential to produce a kind of leveling effect in the materialization of gendered forms. In support of this claim, we need look no further than the left short side of the sarcophagus (just around the corner from the scene of Agamemnon's ghost on the front panel) that shows two similarly shrouded ghosts (fig. 3.4). Beckoned by Charon to embark on their journey to the Underworld, the two shades stand side by side on the bank of the Acheron, their shrouds wrapped tightly around their bodies so that they appear virtually identical. Slight differences between them are nonetheless discernible. Based on how the ghost on the right draws the hem of the drapery up off the ground and betrays a slightly more rounded chest than the other, it seems likely that a female figure was intended alongside a male companion. All the same, it is evidently the *similarity* between the two figures that constitutes their most salient visual feature.

Drapery can index forms of interiority that facial expressions cannot. This is



Fig. 3.4 Orestes sarcophagus (left short side), ca. 130–140 CE. Marble. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican. Photo: G. Singer, DAI Inst. Neg. 71.1785.

evidently the case with a shrouded figure depicted alongside a sleeping Fury on a fragment of an Orestes sarcophagus, now combined into a stucco pastiche, at the Villa Albani in Rome (fig. 3.5).⁴³ Long held to represent the ghost of Agamemnon on account of its striking resemblance to the Orestes sarcophagus in the Vatican, Bielfeldt has observed that this identification is untenable in several key respects. First, and most obviously, the shrouded figure on the Villa Albani fragment is unbearded; this detail alone should cast doubt on the idea that it represents Agamemnon, whose beard has a long history in the iconography of his depiction. More important, the triangular fold of the drapery on the chest indicates a breast underneath, suggesting that it is in fact the ghost of *Clytemnestra* who is depicted here.

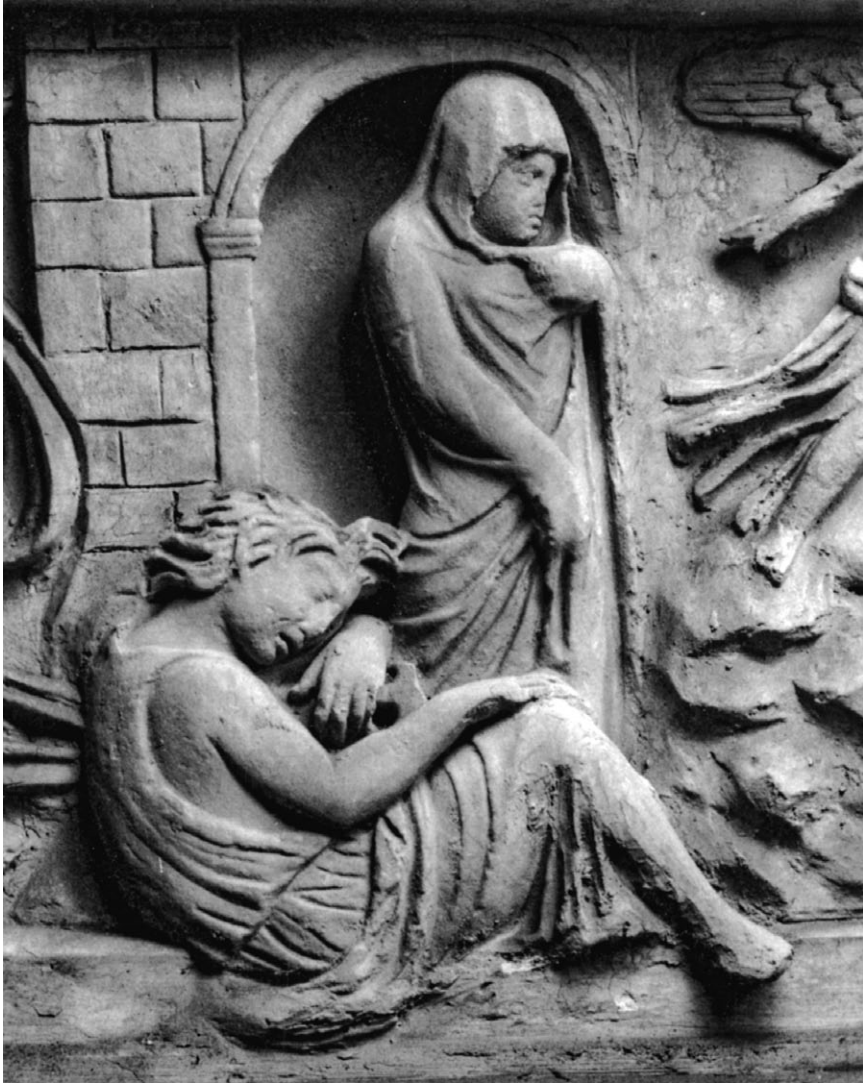


Fig. 3.5 Sarcophagus fragment depicting the ghost of Clytemnestra. Marble. Villa Albani, Rome (after Bol 1994).

And finally there is the manner in which Clytemnestra draws her mantle up to her chin with her enclosed hand in a conventional display of womanly *aidōs*. While it is true that Clytemnestra's *aidōs* was similarly depicted by the Eumenides painter, who showed the ghost of the queen waking the Furies with one hand while adjusting her mantle with the other, the Villa Albani fragment goes a step further by having

both of Clytemnestra's hands, and indeed her whole body save her face, wrapped up tightly in her enveloping garment.

The heightened emphasis on Clytemnestra's *aidōs* in the Villa Albani fragment admits of various interpretations, one of which may have something to do with the Roman reception of the myth as evidenced by Seneca's *Agamemnon*. While the question of whether Seneca's tragedies were ever actually performed on the stage has been a matter of intense debate since the nineteenth century, Edith Hall has observed that dramatic texts that were declaimed in tragic recitals (for which we have ample evidence) were no less "performed."⁴⁴ As Hall demonstrates, Seneca seems to be working within a specifically Roman tradition that had softened, feminized, and even sexualized Clytemnestra from her androgynous, amoral roots in Aeschylus. Perhaps starting from Accius's fragmentary, republican-era tragedy, and certainly since Ovid, whose portrayal of the queen in the *Ars Amatoria* explains her wicked behavior away as a retaliation for Agamemnon's adulterous sin (with Iphigenia's sacrifice being notably absent), Seneca too focused on the psychological frailty of Clytemnestra as a victim of circumstance. Thus, Hall observes, Seneca introduces a range of emotions for Clytemnestra that together would seem completely anathema to her Aeschylean analogue: in rapid-fire succession, she fears her husband Agamemnon (*timor*, 133), desires her lover Aegisthus (*cupido*, 135), and feels shame or sexual modesty (*pudor*, 138) as a result.

Significantly, the Roman taming or softening of Clytemnestra and specifically this focus on her shame or *pudor* seems to have retained its salience even until the fifth century when the Christian poet Dracontius composed his *Orestis Tragoedia*. In this case, as she lay dying, Clytemnestra covers herself all the way down to her feet so that, *extrema in morte pudica* (790), she might not be exposed in her death and might thereby retain some semblance of dignity.⁴⁵ Although it is certainly possible that there are Christian echoes in Dracontius's treatment of Clytemnestra, the roots of her gendered modesty have a deeper genealogy. Pliny, for example, suggests that drowned corpses somehow evince a dispositional *pudor* when he asserts that "men's corpses float on their backs, but women's on their faces, as if nature spared their modesty (*pudor*) after death."⁴⁶ Given the Roman obsession with Clytemnestra's fraught status as a sexual being and an adulteress, the ghost of Clytemnestra on the Villa Albani fragment presents a certain ironic aspect. For even as her gesture displays her *pudor* in the context of her mythological role, it likewise evokes a distinctly *visual* echo of a far more commonplace form of self-fashioning among respectable Roman matrons on Roman sarcophagi. Significantly, the *pudor* of these matrons points time and time again, whether allusively or explicitly, to the ritual of marriage and the political economy of shame and modesty to which it is intimately and inextricably linked. Thus, as we shall see in different ways over the course of

the following two sections, the iconography of the shrouded ghost implicitly, yet intentionally, blurs the lines between the dispositional shame of the ghost and that of the bride who similarly remains concealed under a heavy mantle, invisible to the gaze of her onlookers.

IMPRESSIONS OF ALCESTIS

The myth of Alcestis, renowned for laying down her own life so that her husband might live, constitutes the theme of a sizable corpus of about thirteen mythological sarcophagi that were produced exclusively within the second half of the second century CE. Taken as a group, they are symptomatic of a broader shift in the imagery of mythological sarcophagi away from bleaker and more violent themes of death (such as the Orestes sarcophagus considered in the previous section) to a stronger focus on the dynamics of love and loss, and in a more general sense on what Ewald has called a *Trennungserfahrung*, or an experience of separation.⁴⁷ Whereas previous scholarship had seized upon the resurrection of the heroine as relayed in the Euripidean version in order to stake bolder claims about a patron's beliefs about the afterlife, the recent turn to an emphasis on separation has partially undercut this eschatological premise by stressing the fact that Alcestis's return is seldom pictured in the sarcophagi.⁴⁸ Rather, the focus is typically placed on the pathos of her deathbed scene, which always takes center stage on the front panel of the casket. The visual evidence of the sarcophagi is paralleled by contemporary grave poetry, which similarly stresses the laudable piety of the heroine without any mention of her subsequent resurrection.⁴⁹

Yet, in spite of the broader emphasis in Roman times on the pious death of Alcestis, rather than her resurrection, it remains a striking fact that the most renowned sarcophagus of the whole group does indeed depict the return of the heroine (fig. 3.6). The exemplary yet exceptional status of this Alcestis sarcophagus is owed equally to its high quality, its individualized portraits (one of the very first sarcophagi to institute this practice of having portraits of the deceased stand in for the various mythological personages), and the specificity of the inscription on its lid that names a certain Gaius Junius Euhodus, the magistrate of a carpenter's guild in Ostia, and his wife Metilia Acte, a priestess of the cult of Magna Mater.⁵⁰

The mention of certain details pertaining to Euhodus's term of office, considered along with the close resemblance between his own hairstyle and that of the emperor Lucius Verus, suggests an approximate but reasonably secure date of manufacture around 160 CE. The question of whether Euhodus and Metilia Acte did indeed share some hope for a reunion in life after death is not an unreasonable proposition, since the cult of Magna Mater did indeed subscribe to a belief in a



Fig. 3.6 Alcestis sarcophagus of Metilia Acte, ca. 160 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums.
Photo: G. Singer, DAI Inst. Neg. 72.590.

cycle of death and rebirth. Even if Euhodus and Metilia Acte did envision such a fate for themselves, the imagery evinces little interest in expressing it through the recondite symbolism of mystery rites. What we see instead is the ritual potency of significant if rather more mundane events, and that of marriage in particular.⁵¹

The Euhodus sarcophagus and the return scene in particular serve as a useful springboard from which to take up a set of interrelated questions about what it means to look (or not look) at Alcestis, the vexing suspicion that she might be a ghost, and finally how Alcestis's own subjectivity figures into the gendered dynamics of this exchange of glances—one that is paralleled by a matrimonial gift exchange between Admetus and Hercules in which Alcestis herself is treated as the visible chattel given to be seen at the wedding—akin to or even coextensive with the visual emphasis that was put on the wedding gifts that the ancient lexicographers explicitly tie to vision and things seen—*opteria*, *theoretra*.⁵² As we shall see, it is precisely the reluctance or reticence of Admetus to look and to trust in what he sees that provides a kind of counterweight to the configuration of womanly *aidōs* in the sense that each is grounded in a crucial uncertainty that is at once perceptual and ethical in nature.

The myth of Alcestis, best known today from the tragedy staged by Euripides in 438 BCE, went something like this: Admetus, king of Pherae in Thessaly, learned that he was doomed to die. Fortunately, Apollo was able to persuade the Fates to allow someone else to die in his place. But after no one else was willing to volunteer, Admetus found a willing candidate in his own wife, Alcestis. Her only conditions were that her husband promise not to remarry (if only because she was anxious that a new wife would be wicked to a stranger's offspring) and thus be not only a father but also a mother to his children. Upon her death, Admetus unwittingly admitted Heracles into his home as a guest, unaware of the demigod's true identity.

Later, after Heracles emerged from a drunken stupor and became apprised of recent events, he returned the hospitality of his host by going down to Hades and wrestling with Death to recover Alcestis from the grave. Presenting her to Admetus at the end of the play as a mysteriously veiled yet uncannily familiar bride—a quasi-ghost, really, at this point still toeing the line between life and death—Heracles had to force the widower's hand until the final scene of the play when the happy conclusion was revealed.

The tragic plight of the heroine and her hapless husband enjoyed a strong after-life during the Roman era in a variety of dramatic formats that certainly included, but were not beholden to, its fifth-century Euripidean blueprint, which nevertheless remains the dominant source thanks to its legacy in the Roman reception of Greek tragedy. Thanks in no small part to the classical “renaissance” of the Second Sophistic, Greek tragedy seems to have flourished all the way up through the third century and maybe even beyond.⁵³ At the same time, however, it was often adapted to conform to the conventions of tragic recitals and pantomime performance in which a masked actor assumed multiple roles (alongside “extras” that could include women and children, who were normally excluded from the stage), interpreting with his bodily, often acrobatic movements and gestures the lines that would be read aloud for him.⁵⁴

In his second-century CE treatise *On the Dance*, Lucian explicitly names Alcestis (along with her fellow-countrymen in Thessaly, Protesilaus and his wife Laodamia, as we shall see in the next section) among the mythological personages that were essential components of the dancer's repertory.⁵⁵ As I shall argue more explicitly in relation to the example of Protesilaus, the practice of inserting a patron's portrait features to reprise and recast the role of mythological personages suggests a structural parallel with the performative aspects of the dancer's *métier*.⁵⁶ In some cases, as with Protesilaus, theatrical forms of subjectification could have the potential effect of staging a subversion or resistance to a dominant ideology of gendered norms and their material and political constraints. In the case of the Euhodus sarcophagus, however, I will argue that the appeal to such theatrics *inverts*, rather than subverts, a number of key themes that constitute the subjective and gendered dynamics of the original Greek tragedy. By flipping the script on Euripides's *Alcestis*, the sarcophagus imagery reinscribes certain dominant features of Roman ideology, with marriage chief among them.

Structurally, the compositional weight accorded to the deathbed scene effectively epitomizes the most salient feature of the protagonist's character—her *pietas*—and does so, moreover, in a way that dovetails with the aforementioned tendency in contemporary funerary epigram to focus on the virtuous death of the heroine, rather than her subsequent resurrection. The short sides are only roughly chiseled, suggesting that the casket would have been placed into the niche of a

tomb where the ends would have remained hidden from view. As a result, the narrative complexity of the myth necessarily had to be selectively compressed into the primary visual field on the front panel of the sarcophagus, which comprises three conceptually discrete, yet seamless episodes in chronological order: Admetus's return home, whereupon he learns of his impending doom; the death of Alcestis; and finally, the return scene, where Heracles presents Admetus with Alcestis in the ghostly costume of a blushing bride.

Beginning on the left, Admetus enters through an arched gate that indicates his return home from the hunt, a detail not attested in traditional versions of the myth. Otherwise nude, he wears the *chlamys* over his shoulder and carries a spear in his left hand while leading a tethered dog in his right. Inside his now grief-stricken home filled with mourning servants and family members, Apollo rushes to flee the scene to avoid the contaminating miasma of death. Admetus stands by Alcestis on her deathbed and reaches forward to take her right hand with his own, yet fails to grip it firmly. Too frail to hold on, Alcestis's drooping head and downcast eyes render her unable to meet her husband's gaze with her own. Two small children—an unusual addition in the corpus of Alcestis sarcophagi—kneel just in front of it, one reaching up her arms toward her dying mother as the other averts his eyes in melancholy despair.⁵⁷

The final scene, which really begins with the far right, shows the enthroned figure of Hades, and Persephone, whose left hand rests on her husband's shoulder in a familiar appeal to his leniency, holds an upright torch with her right that makes her resemble Juno, who similarly grasps such a torch when she stands beside Jupiter in her nuptial aspect. Indeed, the scene of Alcestis's return immediately preceding it bears strong overtones of marriage that coincide with similar representations on Roman biographical sarcophagi.⁵⁸ Heracles—shown here with his familiar attributes of the lion's skin and club, and with the three-headed hellhound Cerberus in tow, indicating his recent journey back from the Underworld—officiates his arrival by greeting Admetus with a handshake that recalls an imperial *adventus*, although it likewise offers a visual parallel to the attempted handclasp in the previous scene. The three Fates stand behind Heracles and Alcestis, all of them turned toward Admetus, with one of them handing him a scroll that signals his new lease on life.⁵⁹

Above all, however, it is the veiled figure of Alcestis standing beside Hercules that seems to foreshadow what for all intents and purposes will be a second marriage, with all the connotations of renewal that this suggests. Here, the veil serves to cover a body that is either unavailable to the senses or unavailable for the taking—conditions that, according to the transactional structure and logic of ancient Greek and Roman marriage rituals, were effectively regarded as two sides of the same coin. Raising her covered hand to her chin in a gesticulate expression of *aidōs*, Alcestis

bears all the outward signs of having undergone a complete rejuvenation. Quite literally self-effaced, she has been wiped clean, so to speak, of the wizened physiognomy she had once possessed—a physiognomy, we are led to believe, which had only recently made her specifically, unmistakably, Metilia Acte (figs. 3.7, 3.8). Instead, she now appears thoroughly youthful and idealized, effectively masked by her *aidōs* that renders her unrecognizable even to her own husband, who, having been shown in at least three episodes of the myth, looks the same as ever.⁶⁰

The patently, even shockingly, idealized visage of Alcestis here—especially given the portrait features in the deathbed scene, and indeed the range of portrait features that are given to the extended family of Admetus and Alcestis throughout the sculpted scene—constitutes a source of intentional visual interest. Far from signifying a merely idealized or even banalized vision of a youthful bride, the opacity of the face stages a more dramatic encounter in that it offers a kind of screen for the gaze. Here again we see how the mere depiction of the veil, even when it is raised high enough to let the face be visible, signifies that Alcestis-Metilia “can safely see without being seen or without being identified,” as Derrida remarked of the helmet worn by the ghost of Hamlet’s father. Several related comparisons could be called to mind, chief among them the short sides of several Persephone sarcophagi, where the *aidōs* of the goddess is similarly made visible through the mechanism of her mantle that itself betokens the associative and ambivalent links between marriage and death.

In some of these examples, such as the panel embedded into the façade of the Casino Rospigliosi in Rome, Persephone’s head and face, save for her nose and one eye (if seen from *just* the right angle in ideal conditions—a practical impossibility, given the constraints of space and light in the tomb chamber), remain covered under the heavy folds of her veil that she keeps tightly closed with her right hand (fig. 3.9).⁶¹ In other instances, represented by a late example at the Capitoline Museums in Rome, Persephone pulls back her veil to reveal her face before her husband Hades (fig. 3.10); one example at the Villa Lante on the Janiculum even shows her head fully uncovered.⁶² While it is possible that the depiction of the veil in different states of opening and closing may have something to do with her arrival to, and departure from, the Underworld, its ambivalent presentation of visibility and invisibility, revelation and concealment, seems to insist upon a kind of visual and narrative indeterminacy. The nuptial aspect of this iconography, however, is unmistakable and can be profitably considered in relation to the moment of the *anakalupterion* during the Greek wedding ritual when the bride’s veil, and by extension her *aidōs*, would have been uncovered for the visual pleasure of the groom (perhaps even for the very first time).⁶³

The Romans, too, repeatedly emphasized the power of the reddish bridal veil (*flammea*) to screen the ruddy cheeks of the blushing bride, her eyes downcast,



Fig. 3.7 Alcestis sarcophagus of Metilia Acte (detail of the portrait of Metilia Acte), ca. 160 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.



Fig. 3.8 Alcestis sarcophagus of Metilia Acte (detail of the resurrected Alcestis), ca. 160 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.



Fig. 3.9 Persephone sarcophagus (short side), ca. 160–170 CE. Marble. Casino Rospigliosi, Rome. Photo: C. Faraglia, DAI Inst. Neg. 38.802.

and thereby keep her modesty intact. In the late second century, the Roman grammarian Festus sought to establish an etymological link between the wedding ritual and the phenomenon of concealment in the figure of the cloud, going so far as to claim that “Nuptials are so called because the head of the bride is wrapped around with the bridal veil, which the ancients called ‘to cloud over’ or ‘to veil.’”⁶⁴ Despite the fact that he was writing from a Christian perspective, Tertullian’s *On the Veiling of Virgins*, written only a few decades later around the turn of the third century, is nonetheless revealing for the way in which he argues in favor of the practice to his own Christian brethren by making visible and explicit what the technique of veiling actually does in contemporary Roman eyes:



Fig. 3.10 Persephone sarcophagus (right short side), ca. 230–240 CE. Marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome. Photo: Author.

Let them know that the whole head is the woman. The limits and boundaries of it extend as far from where clothing begins. The veil needs to be as long as the hair when it is let down, in order that the neck too may be wrapped. For [married women] are the ones who must be subjected, [they are the ones] on account of whom “power over the head” ought to be had [by men]. The veil is their yoke. The pagan females of Arabia, who do not cover the head but the total face as well in this fashion, such that they may be content with one eye free to enjoy half the light, rather than to prostitute the whole face, will judge you. A female [there] wishes to see rather than be seen. Therefore, a certain Roman queen says that they are most unhappy since they can love deeply more than be loved deeply . . .⁶⁵

Especially noteworthy here is Tertullian’s emphasis on the constraints that the veil imposes on those whom it covers and thus transforms into fundamentally *disempowered* subjects, save for the “pagan females of Arabia” whose total elision from the field of vision allows them to see without being seen as if they were men. Virgins must be veiled, he argues, in order to protect them not only from their own desires, but also from the scopophilic gaze of ogling men who are themselves susceptible to the powerful effects of their own cathected vision.

But if the veil signals a fundamental indeterminacy between the conditions of visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, power and powerlessness, then the

question of what exactly its concealing effects are meant to accomplish in the return scene of the Euhodus sarcophagus demands closer scrutiny. It hardly seems coincidental that only the deathbed scene receives Metilia Acte's portrait, since to assume the destabilizing subject position of a ghostly bride—one that is not (yet) even recognized by one's husband—would seem anathema to the very occasion and purpose of portraiture itself, especially on a commemorative monument such as this. Why then depict the return scene at all?

Taking up a kind of poststructuralist mantle and a quite literal approach to the "death of the author," recent scholarship on Roman sarcophagi has tended to focus on the relation of the imagery to the bereaved (and not only the deceased) while underscoring the fact that the bereaved potentially included a multiplicity of viewers with different desires, attitudes, and ways of thinking about their relation to the deceased as well as their own mortality.⁶⁶ Along these lines, Ewald has questioned whether the return scene really depicts a return at all. Instead, he suggests, a viewer overcome by grief for the wife who had just left him might have been predisposed to interpret the scene as the departure of Alcestis, rather than her return, "despite the huge contradiction" that such a reading would pose in relation to the myth.⁶⁷

More recently, Bielfeldt has taken a somewhat critical view of this approach by drawing attention to the prospective qualities of Roman sarcophagi, in terms of both their commission and design, in which the patron can be figured as both a living person, a *vivus*, yet simultaneously one who is going to die, a *moriturus*.⁶⁸ For Bielfeldt, Euhodus-Admetus serves as a paradigmatic *moriturus*, one who anticipates his own reunion with the wife who predeceased him in death, rather than in life. Indeed, the only unequivocal scenes of Alcestis's reunion with Admetus show her being physically guided by Hercules and either shaking hands with or directly confronting Admetus. On the Euhodus casket, by contrast, Alcestis remains unmistakably isolated from the exchange between Admetus and Hercules, resolutely fixed in the realm of the dead. "Nonetheless," Bielfeldt asserts, "the image asserts that there *is* a chance of words, gestures, and gazes being exchanged between the two worlds. Admetus is both onlooker and looked upon, as is the beholder of the sarcophagus."

Bielfeldt's stimulating characterization of Euhodus-Admetus and the viewers of the casket as both "onlooker and looked upon" suggests a kind of reciprocity with Alcestis and her contingent *aidōs* that constitutes a similarly twofold status in this ocular interaction. Here I'd like to pursue this twofoldness in terms of its indebtedness to the Euripidean plot on the one hand, and its role in the shaping of a broader discursive tradition on the other. It is at the tail end of Euripides's tragedy that the return of Alcestis takes place, but only after a cagey back and forth between Hercules, who seemingly wishes to surprise Admetus with his "prize," and the mournful husband who wants nothing to do with the strange woman that Hercules is trying

to foist on him—one who bears an uncanny resemblance to his wife as evidenced by her youthful clothing and adornment (*esthēti* and *kosmōi*). Eventually Admetus acquiesces, agreeing against his will to take the woman into his own hand in a manner that not so subtly evokes the transactional gesture of the marriage ritual in which the groom takes his bride's hand (*cheir epi karpō*). Still, Admetus refuses to look upon her face, saying to Hercules, "There, I am reaching out, as if I were beheading the Gorgon."⁶⁹ By comparing himself quite explicitly to the figure of Perseus, who could only gaze upon the terrible face of Medusa by looking away from her and at the reflection on his shield, Admetus quite astutely, if unwittingly, compares the sight of the ghostly figure of his wife to that of a reflection, two kinds of images that could be defined by the same words: *eidōla* and *simulacra*. The suggestion is that to behold the face of Alcestis directly—and by extension Metilia Acte's—would be somehow analogous to beholding the invisible and mortifying face of death itself.⁷⁰ In doing so, however, Admetus runs the risk of conflating them so that he regards his resurrected wife as nothing more than a ghostly reflection, an empty image. Tellingly, the end of the play does little to prove the liveliness of Alcestis beyond the shadow of a doubt.⁷¹

Dumbstruck at the sight of his wife, Admetus hesitates to believe that she's the real thing and tells Hercules that he fears the woman before him is nothing but a "wonder beyond hope," "a vision of joy," and "some phantom from the shades."⁷² Hercules has no time for such games and chides Admetus for his disbelief, steadfastly denying that he is a "conjurer of spirits" (*psychagogos*) who employs mirrors and other divinatory tricks to raise the dead. By lifting the veil from Alcestis and disavowing such hucksterism, Heracles supposedly transforms her from a lifeless, specular image into living flesh and blood. And yet, Euripides does not allow Alcestis to speak: Hercules explains to Admetus that she may not utter a word for three days, until she is fully released from the powers below. And so she stands there mute before her husband like the statue, a cold comfort, that he had pledged to fashion in her absence.⁷³ Her silence is deafening.

For obvious reasons, the scholarship on the Euhodus sarcophagus (and the rest of the Alcestis sarcophagi, for that matter) has tended to explore the commonalities between Euripides's tragedy and the iconography of the sculpted scenes. But the encounter between Admetus and Alcestis had widespread purchase that extended far beyond the theater. Although it has not been exploited by classical art historians and archaeologists, the story of Alcestis's return was also used as a philosophical example to illustrate or model certain epistemological problems regarding the status of appearances in establishing a criterion of truth.⁷⁴ As we know from Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Skepticism*, written in the second century CE and thus roughly contemporary with the sarcophagus imagery, the encounter between Admetus and his resurrected wife had been used ever since the Hellenistic age when the early

Stoics and Academic skeptics invoked the ending of the tragedy in order to come up with their own explanations for why we sometimes refuse to believe something that is real and true even when it is visibly staring us right in the face.

Philosophically speaking, it is crucial that Admetus doesn't just *see* Alcestis. Rather, he sees or receives an appearance or *impression* of her—a *phantasia*, or, as we have already seen in the related case of Timanthes's picture of Agamemnon, a kind of visual image generated in the mind's eye from a particular configuration of sense-data: "When Alcestis had died, Heracles, it is said, brought her up again from Hades and showed her to Admetus, who received an impression (*phantasia*) of Alcestis that was probable and tested; since, however, he knew that she was dead his mind recoiled from its assent and reverted to unbelief (*apistian*)."⁷⁵ The example of Admetus's unbelief appears in yet another treatise, *Against the Logicians*, in which Sextus likewise makes use of the mythological couple to describe the philosophical problem of how it is that we can make sense of visual impressions.⁷⁶ Significantly, Admetus is not presented as an isolated case there, but is rather sandwiched within a triad of supernatural encounters in the plays of Euripides. First, in the context of an extended discussion about Orestes's madness, Sextus quotes a line from the *Orestes* in which the hero misrecognizes his sister Electra for one of the Furies.⁷⁷ Then, following the example of Admetus's disbelief in the *Alcestis*, he invokes the plot of Euripides's *Helen* in which Menelaus, shortly after leaving his wife Helen under guard on his ship, saw the *real* Helen at Proteus's palace in Egypt, where she had been languishing for years.⁷⁸ Like Admetus, Menelaus couldn't believe his own eyes, let alone the idea that the Helen over whom the whole Trojan War had been fought was only an *eidōlon*, a ghostly image.

For Sextus, the example of Admetus's unbelief and its other Euripidean analogues were useful in their capacity to illustrate a major dispute between the early and later Stoics and skeptics that had to do with a fundamental disagreement about whether and how men were able to arrive at the truth via the senses or the reasoning intellect. While the Stoics were convinced of our capacity to grasp the truth, albeit with great effort, the skeptics favored a suspension of judgment, admitting only that certain testable impressions have a greater *probability* of being true than others (and that this probability is what lets us live our lives in relative peace without getting mired in a major epistemological crisis at every turn). Lest one imagine that seeing a ghost is only a special or marginal case that has little to do with the workaday concerns of daily life, Sextus paired the mythological example of Admetus and Alcestis with a more mundane example: "For example, when a rope is lying coiled up in a dark room, to one who enters hurriedly it presents the simply 'probable' appearance of being a serpent; but to the man who has looked carefully round and has investigated the conditions—such as its immobility and its color, and each of its other peculiarities—it appears as a rope, in accordance with an impression that

is probable and tested.”⁷⁹ What links these seemingly incongruous examples for Sextus and other ancient philosophers of different stripes is the difficult problem of belief, a concept which he divides into two distinct categories: on the one hand, a kind of unthinking belief (“as a boy is said to believe his tutor”), and on the other, a more rigorous, philosophically sophisticated version in which we “assent” to various propositions (if we are Stoics) or probabilities (if we are skeptics), the key distinction being the agency that he attaches to the latter (“as when the incontinent man believes him who approves of an extravagant mode of life”).⁸⁰

Yet, as the problem of Admetus’s unbelief makes clear, assenting to something isn’t as simple as surrounding oneself with yes-men. Sextus’s point seems to be that Admetus surely *wanted* to believe that Alcestis had returned from the dead. The problem was that he could not assent to the impression of his living wife because, *in spite of himself*, he knew that the dead don’t come back. It was therefore more probable that his eyes were playing tricks on him and that he was seeing a ghost. Needless to say, it would be difficult to prove an intentionality linking the imagery of the Euhodus sarcophagus to the example of Admetus’s unbelief in this specific, philosophical sense, at least at the kind of granular level of detail that Baxandall brought to bear in his classic account of Lockeanism in relation to Chardin.⁸¹ Nevertheless, it is important to stress that Sextus was often at pains to situate his philosophy within a broader sociology of knowledge, a “democratizing” position that his appeal both to mythology and to the performing arts makes evident, thus lending it a visual or “pictorial corollary,” as Baxandall would say. And so perhaps in the end it is indeed just possible to see the imagery as evidence for a kind of “vulgar skepticism.”

So much for Admetus. But what about Alcestis? What was *she* seeing and feeling in this encounter? It’s a difficult question to answer, not least because we unsurprisingly find only a surfeit of suspicions about female desire in our literary sources that were almost exclusively written by elite men. A quintessential example of the latter can be found in the moralizing satires of Juvenal, written within the first few decades of the second century CE, in which the very question of identity, both social and sexual, had become as increasingly spectral, blurred, and unstable as the distinctions between real life and its staged hyperbole. In his sixth satire, Juvenal explicitly invokes Alcestis in order to rail against those dissolute Roman matrons who would rather adorn themselves in costly garments and jewelry than the pious virtue of the mythological heroine.⁸² Collapsing the categories of satire and tragedy, Juvenal goes so far as to suggest that women would rather emulate the murderous Clytemnestra than the pious virtue of Alcestis: “They watch (*spectant*) Alcestis endure her husband’s death and, if a similar swap were offered to them, they’d happily see their husbands die to save their puppy’s life . . .”⁸³ Virtuous women, if they really do

exist for Juvenal, are now something like an endangered species, their simple beauty and dignity concealed under a mountain of makeup: “Eventually she uncovers her face [literally ‘opens’ her face, *aperit vultum*], removing the outer layers of plaster. She starts to look recognizable (*incipit agnosci*).”⁸⁴ Here the masking effects of cosmetics stand in for the masking effects of the veil, the crucial difference between them being that only the latter confers a sense of matronly modesty.

If Juvenal’s rather cynical consideration of what women viewers want or look for in the mythological *exemplum* of Alcestis seems a world apart from the contemporary concerns of grieving husbands and wives in grave poetry, it’s perhaps only because he caricatures a more subtle shift in the Roman transformation of Admetus in the second century from a symbol of feminine passivity to the very embodiment of virile masculinity—a transformation that had a profound impact on his dynamic with Alcestis and everything it stood for.⁸⁵ For Euripides, as Nicole Loraux observes, the result of all of Alcestis’s noble suffering is that it has “the recoil effect of feminizing the well-loved husband. He is driven to become the mother as well as the father of their children, and condemned to live henceforward cloistered like a virgin or chaste as a bride inside the palace, which his wife has left to join in death the open spaces of manly heroism.”⁸⁶ In Pompeian wall painting, the conceit of a similarly feminized Admetus can be seen in pictures that focus on the moment when the king discovers his terrible fate so that his wife’s sacrifice figures into the scene only in a proleptic and relational sense in the programmatic ensemble of the domestic setting. Indeed, the feminizing depiction of Admetus in the House of the Tragic Poet—the long tresses of hair that cascade down his neck, the mantle that gathers on his lap in such a way as to suggestively frame his genitals, and even his pale complexion—effectively figures him as a kind of soft, elegiac lover who serves at the beck and call of his dominant mistress.⁸⁷

In the Euhodus sarcophagus, by contrast, the gendered dynamics are cannily manipulated so that the protagonists can have their proverbial cake and eat it too. Alcestis’s self-sacrifice still makes her an unambiguous *exemplum pietatis*, yet her deference to the social order of things, and to the institution of marriage in particular, has the important effect of allowing Admetus’s masculinity—signified by portraying him in the homosocial context of a hunting party—to remain solidly intact. In this confrontation beyond the grave, whatever reciprocity might be imagined or promised between husband and wife is recognized on both sides to be ineluctably asymmetrical in nature. The ambivalent iconography of Alcestis, one which purposefully and pointedly stresses the undecidability of her status as either a ghost, a bride, or somehow both at once, makes her existential instability *itself* visible. More than simply being idealized, therefore, Metilia-Alcestis’s veiled face conveys an agnostic sensibility. It depicts nothing less than a reciprocal, if frustrated, dy-

namics of the gaze in which the uncertainty of the postmortem condition has the potential to render oneself unrecognizable not only to one's partner but also, and crucially, even to oneself.

PROTESILAUS AND THE ART OF MOURNING

The last section of this chapter returns to the myth of Protesilaus and the two sarcophagi that depict it (as discussed in chapter 1, figs. 1.8 and 1.11).⁸⁸ Building on the questions of pictorial allusion and citationality raised in that earlier chapter, I'd like now to consider more deeply the social field in which they took shape. How, in fact, did the ancients go on living with the dead? And how does the iconography of the shroud operate within this ideology of mourning and its gendered semiosis? In order to show how the elegiac basis of this phenomenon could be made to matter through constitutively visual modes of address, I'd like to return to the Vatican sarcophagus depicting the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, this time with a view to the scopic regime of shame developed thus far. In order to show how these observations as well as the arguments of the preceding sections open up onto a broader terrain of historical action and specificity, I also consider the unique and decidedly extreme examples of Herodes Atticus and his infamous displays of grief for his wife, Regilla. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate how the complexity of the imagery fits together with contemporary attitudes about sophistic self-performance and the limit conditions of socially acceptable forms of mourning.

Before taking a closer look at the Vatican sarcophagus, it's worth returning to a problem of method that I raised at the beginning of this chapter on the issue of exemplarity and exceptionality in the iconography. To that end, I'd like to draw attention to some important facts that will help underscore the reasons why this narrow case study is particularly heuristic. Within the extensive corpus of Roman mythological sarcophagi that comprise about a fifth of the approximately 10,000 pieces that survive from Roman metropolitan workshops, the legend of Protesilaus is exceedingly seldom.⁸⁹ In fact, the two examples discussed here reflect the sum total, rather than a sampling, of sarcophagi that treat this theme. This distinguishes them from the Orestes and Alcestis sarcophagi considered above which, even as they constitute unusual examples of a given corpus, at least retain certain iconographic elements that work to qualify the corpus as such in the first place. By contrast, the Protesilaus sarcophagi have entirely distinct iconographies. From a purely economic perspective, therefore, it would perhaps be fair to say that the Protesilaus sarcophagi are not *statistically* significant with regard to either the bottom lines of craftsmen or the popular tastes of patrons. This doesn't mean, of course, that they are not significant in other ways.

By any measure, the Protesilaus sarcophagi remain demonstrably unconventional pieces that were almost certainly special commissions designed by and for people with considerable money and means. In a rather narrow sense, therefore, the sarcophagi offer a glimpse into the world of emotion and its visual expression for two extremely sophisticated, if idiosyncratic, individuals. I say “idiosyncratic” because one of the most common explanations for the rarity of the Protesilaus myth on mythological sarcophagi has to do with the observation that while such woe-filled suffering may have had all the makings of great theater, the miserable plight of its protagonists appears to evoke only the negative emotions of grief and loss—emotions, moreover, that were expressed in a decidedly theatrical tone to match, rather than a stoicizing *praemeditatio malorum*.⁹⁰ While Protesilaus and Laodamia epitomized the ideal of a love worth dying for, it’s essential to recall that theirs, like that of Admetus and Alcestis, was not a story of love *overcoming* death. For Alcestis, as we have seen, it was her virtue, rather than her return, that mattered most. On account of her comparable devotion to Protesilaus, the same qualities could be attributed in grave poetry to Laodamia, and by extension to the deceased, although the moral underpinnings of this comparison, as we shall see, were slightly riskier and more ambiguous. But the stronger claim I wish to stake is that they likewise evince a broader cultural discourse about the nature of mourning, how it unfolds over time, and the deeply gendered practices that govern how it is felt and shown to others.

It is useful to consider the close identification of the deceased with certain mythological protagonists in terms of what the gender theorist Judith Butler calls performative “resignification.”⁹¹ More than simply employing a conventional or ready-made motif, resignification involves a “stylized repetition of acts,” that theatrically constitute the self both within and against a given system of regulating codes and conventions that in turn constitute the discursive identity of the body and its sensuous materiality. This seems to me a model that is particularly well equipped to get at the suggestive affinities between identification and role-play that are borne out in the sarcophagi, one that has the added advantage of emphasizing the gendered dynamics of certain myths which concern themselves with partnered husbands and wives recast in destabilizing situations that could never be transgressed within the normative boundaries of Roman society. This is made explicit in the widespread practice of adding portrait features of the deceased to the protagonists of myth (even in the case of those like the Vatican Protesilaus sarcophagus that remain unfinished, but were ostensibly intended to be completed at some point in the future).⁹² For Butler, the politics of subversive resignification entails the assumption of a certain amount of *risk* in the sense that the recursive attempt to effect some kind of transformative change through repetition may inadvertently succeed only in reproducing and reinforcing the negative or undesirable aspects of what it

cites. In the case of Protesilaus and Laodamia, this question of risk—whether on the part of the pantomime dancer or in the related case of sophistic self-performance—seems especially pertinent to the stakes of identification in mythological sarcophagi that delight in skirting the limits of decorum and propriety especially in the case of mourning. The best evidence for this claim can be seen in the imagery of the Vatican sarcophagus itself.

As I already indicated in chapter 1, the left short side of the sarcophagus immediately frames the emotional stakes of the mythological *exemplum* (fig. 1.15). Here we see the leave-taking of husband and wife recast in the form of a stereotypical scene that appears on countless funerary reliefs of the Classical period in Athens. Armed for battle, Protesilaus takes the hand of a seated Laodamia in the familiar handshake motif (*dexiosis*) that signifies the traditional family (and, in this case, marital) bonds of affection.⁹³ At the same time, however, the bonds that join these figures seem to mark them apart in a decidedly asymmetrical fashion: seated and standing, clothed and naked, they exist in two separate spheres in both psychological and physical terms. The hanging folds of the *parapetasma* behind Laodamia suggest that the hero's departure is taking place in the interior of the house, as contrasted with the arched gateway on the far right of this panel that marks a liminal space between Greece and Troy and the side and front panels alike.

On the left side of the front panel, Hector slays the feckless hero whose lifeless body lies awkwardly splayed out at the base of the gangplank so that only his head and upper torso remain visible (fig. 1.12). His ghost, meanwhile, emerges from the corpse wearing a heavy mantle or shroud that closely resembles that of Agamemnon on the Orestes sarcophagus. To recapitulate, then, we move from the body of a hero who is semi-naked to one who is fully armed, to one who is completely enmeshed within a bulk of heavy drapery. This progression of modes of concealment is interrupted by the very next sequence in the narrative. Immediately to the right of this scene, Hermes escorts Protesilaus, now unveiled and wearing only his *chlamys*, back to the world of the living for a brief visit thanks to the pity of Pluto and Persephone.

The radical transformation of the hero's appearance from spectral presence to handsome groom is reminiscent of a contemporary passage from Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* that helps explain his change of costume:

PLUTO: Do you want that fair bride of yours to see you as you are now—a bare unsightly skull? What sort of a welcome will she give you, if she can't even recognize you? She'll be frightened, I'm sure, and run away from you, and you'll find your long journey up to earth to have been a waste of time.

PERSEPHONE: Then, dear husband, *you* must put matters right, and instruct Hermes to touch Protesilaus with his wand the moment he's in the light, and make him the handsome youth he was when he left the bridal chamber.⁹⁴

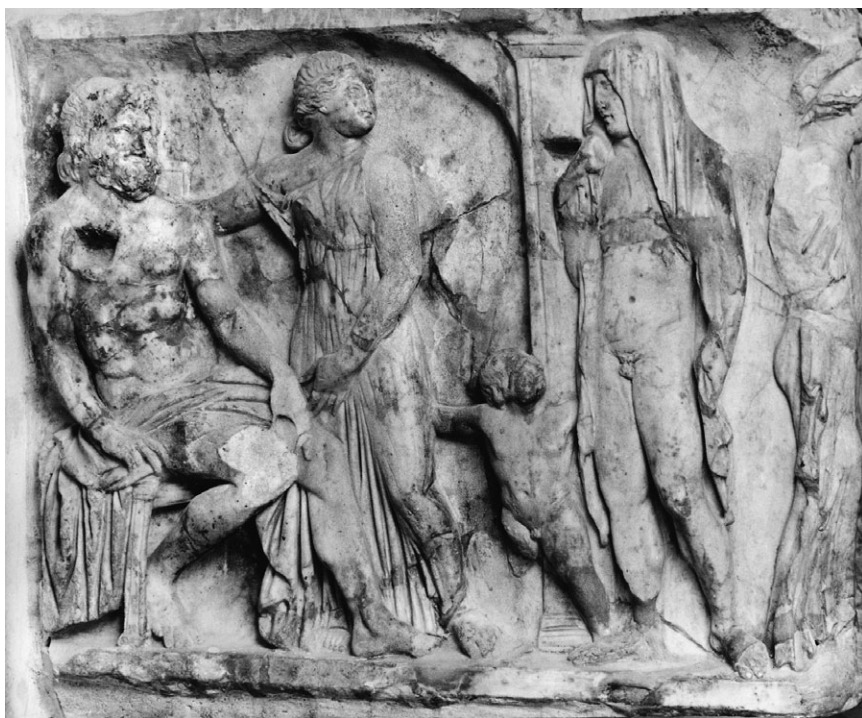


Fig. 3.11 Protesilaus sarcophagus (left short side), ca. 150 CE. Marble. Santa Chiara, Naples.
Photo: H. Koppermann, DAI Inst. Neg. 59.821.

The Vatican sarcophagus doesn't pause to fill in the gaps of this lighthearted exchange, but we do seem to get a glimpse of it on the left short side of the Protesilaus sarcophagus at Santa Chiara in Naples (fig. 3.11). There, Pluto himself sits enthroned on the left while his wife, placing her arm around his back and tenderly caressing his left hand with her own, seems to offer a gentle plea for the deceased lover's plea. Persephone's soft spot for such requests, presumably the result of her own version of Stockholm syndrome in Hades, was a common trope that conferred upon her a kind of Venusian alter ego. The small but significant detail of her garment slipping off the shoulder in a sexy invitation, not to mention the little cupid interceding between the goddess and the hero, corresponds more to the iconography of Venus than Persephone, although the context of the myth has it otherwise.

As for the ghost of Protesilaus, the most striking difference between his appearance on the Santa Chiara sarcophagus and that on its Vatican counterpart has to do with the fact that he is at once covered *and* nude (fig. 3.12). Part death shroud, part bridal veil, Protesilaus's dress is ambiguously yet emphatically gendered, as is the precious detail of his hand, wrapped under a heavy mantle, that he brings to his



Fig. 3.12 Protesilaus sarcophagus (detail of left short side), ca. 150 CE. Marble.
Santa Chiara, Naples. Photo: Author.



Fig. 3.13 Protésilaios sarcophagus (detail showing the homecoming of Protésilaios on the front panel), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.

chin in an unmistakable gesture of *aidōs* (as we saw, for example, with the ghost of Clytemnestra). We are meant to look, and to look hard, at such feminine displays of modesty and the surprising contrast it inevitably sets up with the supple strength of his masculine physique, not to mention his conspicuously displayed sex.

Returning to the Vatican sarcophagus, there is a similarly salient, yet entirely overlooked, detail in the encounter scene located in the center of the front panel, where Protésilaios appears with his beloved Laodamia (fig. 3.13). Although the protagonists bear a strong resemblance to married couples on *vita humana* sarcophagi, there is something disquietingly out of step with Protésilaios's depiction, namely that he is shown covering himself in a pose that resembles the famous Knidian Aphrodite or, in the Roman tradition, the Venus Pudica (the "modest" Venus), but with a slight twist that also evokes the Syracuse-type in which the goddess covers herself with a swath of drapery gathered together in her left hand (fig. 3.14).⁹⁵ Many Roman matrons were commemorated with funerary statues that recurred to one or a mixture of these types. The addition of portrait features to these idealized types has long been regarded as a quintessential example of how the Romans, in contrast to the Greeks, conceived of the body as a configuration of signifying elements, rather than a cohesive totality. In other words, while the portrait features conveyed

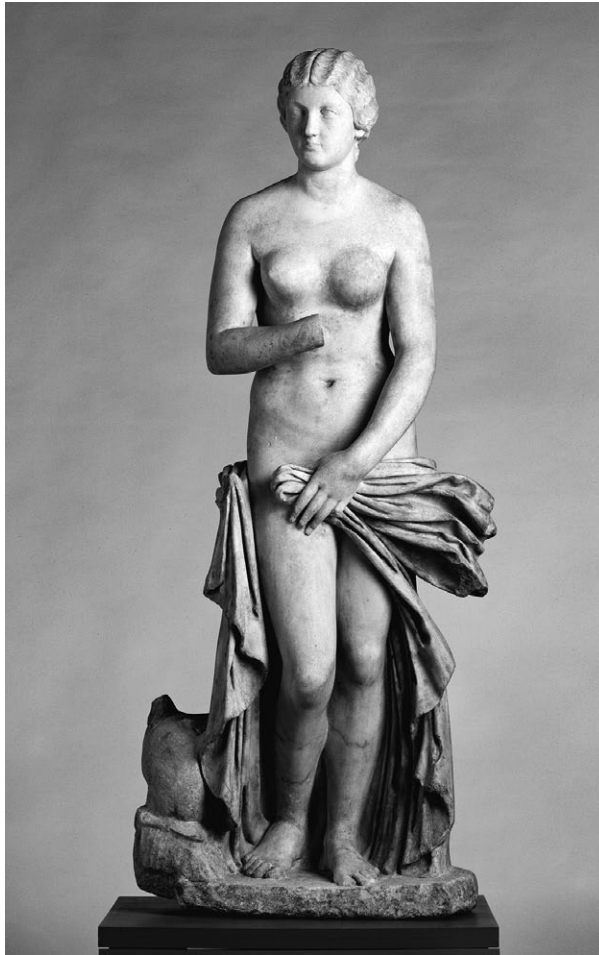


Fig. 3.14 Portrait of a Roman woman (Lucilla?) as Venus, ca. 165–175 CE. Marble. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo: Bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY.

the individuality or locus of personhood, the Aphrodite-type signaled metaphorical ideals of fertility and desirability. As Annetta Alexandridis has recently shown, the copying of Aphrodite-types in female portrait statues in Roman art, a phenomenon that was especially popular in Italy, particularly in the mid- to late second century, does not simply mirror the reality of Roman concepts of the body, but rather plays an active role in constructing that reality by modeling and transforming it in a dynamic exchange.⁹⁶ The appropriation of this canonically female model for a male subject is utterly unique in Roman art. More than an exception that proves the rule, it demonstrates the gendered politics of resignification, inviting us to ask

what exactly is at stake when male subjects assume traditionally female roles.⁹⁷ On our sarcophagus, the hero is effectively transformed into a kind of “Protesilaus Pudicus,” holding his *chlamys* squarely in front of his genitals, thereby covering his *aidōs* or *pudor* in a chastened display of desirability.⁹⁸

Bucking established conventions, the sculptor indeed seems to have gone to a great deal of trouble to *avoid* portraying Protesilaus in his full, heroic nudity. This is particularly evident in the depiction of Protesilaus disembarking at Troy in the previous scene, where his left thigh and leg are planted firmly in the boat as his right leg (now missing, but clearly extending upward and outward in line with his buttock) is awkwardly raised precisely to the level where his genitals would normally be visible; even his corpse at the base of the gangplank seems to have been violently manipulated in order that his lower half not be shown. And earlier, in the leave-taking scene on the left short side of the sarcophagus, Protesilaus wears only his *chlamys* and yet has his genitals conveniently concealed by a demonstrably phallic yet miniaturized spear whose base he grasps with his left hand.

There is an intriguing parallel to the invisibility of Protesilaus’s private parts in the Younger Philostratus’s *Heroicus*, in which two peasants engage in a remarkably sophisticated dialogue about a number of big-ticket topics—identity and belief chief among them—that coalesce in the figure of the hero’s ghost. Most significant in the present context is the sexualization of Protesilaus on the part of a vine-grower who regularly sees him haunting the countryside of the Thracian Chersonese. Remarking on his beauty to a Phoenician traveler, the vine-grower describes Protesilaus as “compact and light, like herms (*hermon*) set up at racetracks.”⁹⁹ In addition to the structural similarity between ghosts and statues that Philostratus makes explicit here, it’s clear that there is more to the choice of a herm as a point of comparison, as Tim Whitmarsh wittily observes:

Now, the comparison of a beautiful body to a statue is reasonably common in erotic discourse, so it is the choice of the word *hermes* that is most striking about this sentence. The most definitive feature is the erect phallus. There is no reference, here or elsewhere, to Protesilaus’s penis. The herm simile, however, invites the reader to fantasize. Indeed, as soon as we have begun thinking about penises, we might wonder what precisely the phrase “compact and light (*eupages . . . kai kouphos*)” means. To which part(s) of the anatomy could this phrase refer? Protesilaus’s penis is not there in the text, but its invisibility is more than just an absence: it is an invitation to imagine. The penis is *sous rature*, visible in its evanescence, an absent presence.¹⁰⁰

For Whitmarsh, the *Heroicus* (which dates to the third century, several decades after the Vatican sarcophagus was produced and interred in its sepulchral context)

was by no means a simple expression of Greek identity politics or religious piety. Rather, he writes, “the text makes an issue of interpretation” in the sense that it is “‘performed’ through the act of reading, not megaphonically proclaimed in the act of writing.”¹⁰¹ So too, I suggest, does the Vatican sarcophagus, albeit through exclusively pictorial means.

But at least on the issue of Protesilaus’s erotic fulfillment, the sarcophagus imagery seems to be doing something different entirely. When asked how Protesilaus and Laodamia are faring now that the hero (though dead) is back in his homeland, the vine-grower responds that they are “like passionate newlyweds.”¹⁰² In order to cast off any lingering doubts about what this means exactly, the Phoenician responds in kind, asking whether the vine-grower is able to embrace Protesilaus, or whether the ghost “eludes your grasp like smoke, as he does the poets?”¹⁰³ The vine-grower is happy to confirm that indeed “He is glad to be embraced by me, and allows me to kiss him and linger on his neck.” This stands in stark contrast to earlier treatments of the hero such as we read in Petronius’s topsy-turvy *Satyricon*, where Encolpius is described as “luckier” (*gratiosorem*) than Protesilaus since, just as Mercury brought the hero back to life, so the selfsame god has resurrected his own member and cured his recurring bouts of erectile dysfunction.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the Vatican sarcophagus, even as it participates in the same kind of Homeric revisionism as the *Heroicus*, repeatedly if implicitly denies such a libidinal and existential consummation to Protesilaus.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, all of these “missed” opportunities to allow Protesilaus to “reclaim the phallus” and appear in the conventional form of heroic nudity are perhaps attributable to the elegiac tradition of the thwarted and frustrated romance that surrounds the myth of these ill-fated lovers. Lucian’s emphasis on what was quite literally the honeymoon from hell for Protesilaus and Laodamia echoes the sentiments of earlier authors, particularly the Latin elegists, who situate the erotic elements of this myth in relation to broader themes of fidelity and loss. Catullus, for example, refers to the home of Protesilaus and Laodamia as one “that was begun vainly,” and describes Laodamia as the victim of “a sundered marriage.”¹⁰⁶ Despite the fact that Catullus excludes the supernatural elements of the story in his poetic refashioning, it is no wonder that the center of the front panel of the sarcophagus is dedicated to the temporary reunion of husband and wife.

The fleeting nature of this encounter, not to mention the tragic separation it portends, is nevertheless anchored by its very place within the composition as well as by the portrait features that were meant to be added later on. As others have noted, the right arms of both protagonists (now missing) would probably have been joined to represent the *dextrarum junctio*, or clasp of right hands, signifying the bonds of conjugal union that constituted a familiar theme in Roman biographical sarcophagi. Moreover, the architectural setting behind the couple trades on a kind

of semantic flexibility in that it both recalls the “half-complete” palace in Thessaly (a trope that may even have been literalized in the “half-complete” carving of the portrait heads) and as well the façade of a tomb complete with an inscriptional plaque that in turn resembles the multi-storied brick-tomb on the Via Latina in which the casket was said to have been found.¹⁰⁷

Applying the same prospective commemorative logic of the *moriturus* to the Protesilaus sarcophagus as she does to the Euhodus casket, Bielfeldt persuasively suggests that the encounter scene “provides the hermeneutic key to the entire sarcophagus, in that it directly mirrors the situation of the patrons standing before and looking at their future sarcophagus . . . they would have accepted that after their death it might have appeared awkward and anachronistic to a beholder.”¹⁰⁸ Here I would only add that if the compositional centrality of the encounter scene creates the illusion of permanence and stability—one that the slippage between house and tomb threatens to undercut in a potentially anachronic narrative—so too does the iconography of the hero. Protesilaus’s *aidōs* or *pudor*, signaled by the subversive manipulation of his cloak or *chlamys* in a feminine identification with Venus at her bath, itself betokens an elegiac sensibility of erotic frustration and its perpetual deferrals.

For her part, Laodamia’s sexuality appears just as complicated. In the next scene, which explicitly deflates any hopefulness the previous one might appear to construct, the heroine lies down on a small bed, where she suffers her final moments. With her mouth agape and head tilted back, she seems to be holding up the knife (originally placed in her damaged right hand, of which enough remains to say something about its position) that she either has or is about to plunge into her breast in order to rejoin her husband in the Underworld (fig. 3.15). Other aspects of the scene disclose the reasons behind Laodamia’s frenzied appearance. Her disheveled hair and exposed left shoulder, the cymbals and flutes stashed beneath the bed, as well as the enshrined portrait of Protesilaus and thyrsus behind her—all of these details point toward the Bacchic element of the story that explained how Laodamia tried to cope, infamously, with the absence of her husband. In a later passage from the *Imagines*, for example, the Elder Philostratus describes a painting depicting a similar theme—that of a woman committing suicide to join her husband in death—except that he draws a sharp distinction between the dignity of the woman in that picture and the example of Laodamia, quipping that “she departs, not like the wife of Protesilaus, wreathed with the garlands of the Bacchic rites she had been celebrating . . . but keeps her beauty unadorned and just as it was.”¹⁰⁹

Protesilaus, meanwhile, sits on the left edge of the bed, his legs tightly crossed in an unvarying feminine iconography, his fist raised up to his cheek in melancholy silence and with averted eyes. Here again, we are confronted with the subversion of the traditional iconography of marriage (plate 3.3) in which the groom, thighs



Fig. 3.15 Protésilaios sarcophagus (detail showing the suicide of Laodamia on the front panel), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.

spread wide apart to reveal everything he has to offer, gazes intently at his demure and heavily veiled bride as he attempts to persuade her into acquiescing to the inevitable consummation of their union.¹¹⁰ Instead, Protesilaus has been assimilated to the position of the bride, just as Laodamia, flailing about on the couch in a suicidal Bacchic frenzy, turns her passions inside out in the most immodest display imaginable.¹¹¹ By contrast, her shade, in a perfect, albeit reversed, symmetry with that of Protesilaus on the other side of the front panel, appears behind the death-bed scene. Encased within a ghostly shroud, of which only a single triangular fold across the breast reveals her sex, Laodamia's *ghost*, if not her person, becomes the very picture of a shamefast wife.

In the final episode of this narrative sequence, Hermes, appearing between the three male figures in this scene, once again takes Protesilaus back to Hades where a bearded Charon, the ferryman of the Styx, awaits him (fig. 3.16). As Protesilaus is badly damaged in this scene, scholars have tended not to pay him much attention except to remark that he is returning to Hades. Closer examination reveals an important detail: located to the left of the center of the broken head, the top of the bridge of a nose is discernible just where it meets the brow (the "looped" form above the point where his *chlamys* rests on his shoulder is in fact part of Hermes's



Fig. 3.16 Protésilas sarcophagus (detail of Protésilas's return to the Underworld), ca. 170 CE. Marble. Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.

caduceus as it is shown behind Protesilaus three scenes previous).¹¹² In contrast to reconstructed drawings that show Protesilaus heading straight into Hades without any regard for Laodamia, this crucial detail suggests that the young groom was instead turning back to face his wife in the penultimate scene.

Thus, whereas Protesilaus had previously looked away from Laodamia precisely at the moment of her suicide, he now looks back longingly after her ghost, who will soon join him in the Underworld. In this way, Protesilaus becomes a kind of anti-Orpheus, the very opposite of the bard who descended into Hades to entreat Persephone for the return of his wife, Eurydice, to the land of the living. For, unlike Orpheus's forbidden gaze upon Eurydice during their climb to the world above, Protesilaus's retrospection is precisely what alludes to his eternal reunification with Laodamia, albeit in death—a sentiment that finds a more literal, if touching, expression, as we saw in the stucco decoration of a tomb at Ostia belonging to a certain P. Aelius Maximus, where an enthroned Pluto reaches out to welcome Laodamia to Hades, with Protesilaus waiting patiently by his side (fig. 2.13).¹¹³ However subtle, the detail of Protesilaus looking back at Laodamia has the potential to alter the emotional tenor of the sarcophagus imagery by casting the hero in a more sympathetic light. It also demonstrates an unusually explicit way to blend two such scenes together, especially since the scene of Laodamia's suicide had already telescoped two discrete events into a single synoptic view.

In a mirror image of the left side of the front panel where Protesilaus disembarked at Troy, the hero now prepares to board Charon's boat through an arched gate that connects the Underworld with the world above, as well as the front and side panels of the sarcophagus. The algebraic clarity of the composition cleverly articulates the perfect *asymmetry* of the protagonists and their inability to ever make lasting contact with one another (even in the center where it appears as if they do from a formal perspective, but not a narrative one). The composition diagrams this elegiac mode of suspended eroticism. An informed viewer might even have recalled the elegies of Propertius who "constantly and histrionically imagines himself dead," as Michèle Lowrie observes.¹¹⁴ In 1.19, for example, the poet explicitly compares his unfulfilled yearning for Cynthia to the plight of Protesilaus:

There, in the regions of darkness, the scion of Phylacus (i.e., Protesilaus) could not forget his lovely wife but, yearning to touch with unreal hands his heart's delight, came, a ghost of Thessaly, to his ancient home. There, whatever I shall be, I shall always be called the shade that belongs to you: the might of love crosses even the shores of death.¹¹⁵

Thus the sculptor seizes one final opportunity to highlight the *aidōs* of our mythological protagonist and its potential to short-circuit the erotic gaze. In a gesture that

somehow manages to be even more emphatic than the central scene, Protesilaus covers himself once more with his *chlamys* using both hands.

This denial of the body, and of the sundered marriage it signals, is the key to the final scene that appears on the right short side of the sarcophagus. There we find the familiar trio of Sisyphus, Ixion, and Tantalus, the infamous souls who were doomed to suffer perpetual torment in the depths of the Underworld for their various crimes against the gods (fig. 1.18). Their appearance here, despite the absence of the main protagonists, does much more than situate us in the realm of the dead. Rather, their presence is a fitting end to the visual narrative that unravels on the other two sides of the sarcophagus, for the recurring punishments they are forced to endure parallel the trials of Protesilaus, Laodamia, and their spectral selves: love lost, regained, and lost again—and, as the story usually goes, regained. Except that on the Vatican sarcophagus, love—or, more properly speaking, marital *concordia*—is not regained, nor are we given any clues that it might be. The imagery of the sarcophagus insists on this point repeatedly and unequivocally. Perhaps the closest analogue to the final scene of these perpetually tortured souls is thus the legendary elms on the tomb of Protesilaus that were said to wither each time they grew tall enough to “see” Troy on the distant horizon.¹¹⁶

In order to show how the ideology of mourning operates not only on the level of this imagery, but also on that of the social conditions in which it was produced, I’d like to consider how the Vatican sarcophagus fits together with the broader discourse of sophistic self-fashioning in the Roman world. Specifically, I wish to trace some provocative points of contact between the Vatican sarcophagus and the commemorative practices of Herodes Atticus, the fabulously wealthy sophist and statesman whose worldly blessings were harshly tempered by the loss of nine children (four of whom were biological) and his Roman wife, Regilla, whom he was accused, but eventually acquitted, of having murdered. The nature and extent of Herodes’s mourning was a topic of rampant gossip among his contemporaries, many of whom (along with some modern scholars) suspected it to be disingenuous, or at the very least excessive.¹¹⁷ With respect to Regilla, the fact that Herodes compared his own grief and loss to the legend of Protesilaus and Laodamia not once, but twice, and in decidedly monumental ways at that, suggests some possible avenues for considering the sarcophagus imagery from the perspectives of both patron and viewer alike. My goal here is not at all to suggest that Herodes commissioned this particular sarcophagus (although the fact that the tomb in which it was discovered lies a mere stone’s throw from Regilla’s estate on the Via Appia shows that it was tantalizingly located in the same sphere of events), much less that the example of his mourning was in any sense normative, but rather to insist upon the value of his behavior as a limit case.¹¹⁸

Of all the monuments that Herodes set up to commemorate the deceased

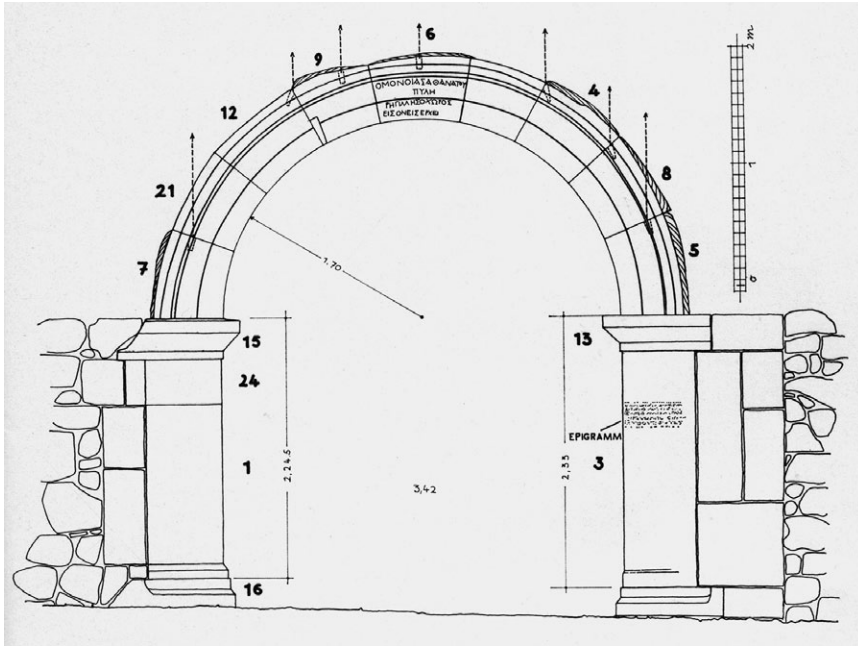


Fig. 3.17 Drawing of the Gate of Immortal Concord at Herodes Atticus's estate at Marathon (after Mallwitz 1964).

Regilla, who seems to have died in either 160 or 161, the one that directly, if not explicitly, evokes the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia is the “Gate of Immortal Concord” at the sophist’s estate at Marathon (fig. 3.17).¹¹⁹ As the inscriptions on both sides of the arch clearly indicate, this gate was meant to divide part of the estate’s quarters into distinctly gendered spaces during the life of the married couple. Thus, on the south side of the arch, the inscription on the keystone reads: “The Immortal Gate of Concord. You are entering Regilla’s area.” On the corresponding north side, it says: “The Immortal Gate of Concord. You are entering Herodes’ area.” After the death of Regilla, another inscription was added to the gate (as the roughly dressed surface of the stone makes clear), this time on the right pier on the south side of the arch. It is composed in three elegiac couplets:

Ah, blessed is he who has built a new city, calling it
by Regilla’s name; he lives in exultation.
But I live in grief because my dwelling has been built
without my beloved wife, and my home is half-complete.
For the gods in truth, when they have mixed the cup of human life,
pour out joys and griefs as neighbors side by side.¹²⁰

Noting the Homeric allusions in the epigram, Maude Gleason has recently drawn attention to the second set of elegiac couplets that compare Herodes's own situation to that of Protesilaus and Laodamia. Choosing to avoid any kind of explicit citation, Herodes (now assuming the first person in a sudden shift from the perspective of the previous two lines) invites the comparison by alluding to the plight of those lovers through the Homeric formulation of the *domos hemitelēs*, or "half-complete house," that was a mainstay of sophistic contemplation. In doing so, as Gleason argues, Herodes effectively creates a "poetic reversal of gender identification," for the logic of the allusion assimilates Herodes to the widowed *Laodamia*, rather than the deceased hero.¹²¹

Of course, such a reversal of gender positions is not unique to Herodes, nor is it even unique within the literary treatment of the myth.¹²² Long before, Catullus had compared Laodamia's loyalty to his own devotion, rather than Lesbia's. The epigram on the arch at Marathon thus follows in the respectable tradition of Latin elegy, which, as the example from Catullus demonstrates, often foregrounds a subjectivity of subversive identification that constituted one of the hallmarks of the genre. Hérica Valladares has cogently outlined the stakes of this poetic conceit in her observation that "in the topsy-turvy world of Latin elegy, where the poet's persona is at the mercy of an elusive, often irascible *domina*, the suspension of erotic action playfully subverts expected sexual and social hierarchies."¹²³ Historically speaking, the flame of Latin love elegy burned brightly but briefly, spanning a period of roughly seventy-five years beginning in the mid-first century BCE with Catullus and effectively ending with the exile of Ovid in 17 CE. Needless to say, there is a considerable gulf between the ways in which the Latin elegists of the first century and a Romanized Greek sophist like Herodes in the mid- to late second century had negotiated the various expectations of established gender roles. The most important of these, I would argue, is that the countercultural poet could always lay down the pen and reassume his traditional place in the social order. The poetic conceit, in other words, was just that: a conceit that was legibly coded as such.

In the case of sophistic self-performance, however, such distinctions could be practically unrecognizable, or perhaps recognizable but nevertheless irresolvably suspect.¹²⁴ Natalie Boymel Kampen has neatly summed up the nature of the problem with specific reference to the mourning of Herodes in the aftermath of the murder trial: "One position is the standard disparagement of feminizing excess seen as an unconscious and uncontrollable manifestation of the essential self; the other, the uneasy acknowledgment of the undecidability of sophistic self-performance, an undecidability rooted in the fact that we, and contemporaries, often could not tell what was authentic and what was manipulation."¹²⁵ In an important epistemological sense, there seems to be a kind of parallel between the undecidability of the

sophist's self-performance and the skeptical philosopher's suspension of judgment, as we saw in the preceding section. In the end, any evidence resulting from any attempt to "test" or "scrutinize" his true intentions or emotions (with the Protesilaus allusion not really doing him any favors, given that the protagonist has a direct hand in his wife's demise) was perhaps just as equivocal as that which informed Admetus's doubts about whether Alcestis had really been returned to him in flesh and blood. Indeed, this undecidability might even be theoretically extended to the Venusian iconography of our "Protesilaus Pudicus." Did contemporary Roman viewers see and recognize this iconography? In other words, did they *pictorialize* it within their visual culture? Or might they have failed to recognize its pictoriality in the way that modern scholars have passed it over in silence? Or perhaps, as T. J. Clark famously showed with an enviable mountain of primary sources, in the way that virtually all of the contemporary critics of Manet's *Olympia* (1863) failed to see the obvious (for us, at any rate) allusion to Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538) that was displayed in close proximity at the Louvre? That these critics failed to see it not because they were not trained to see such studied forms of pictorial reference (as they often did in their critiques of the Salon), but rather because they had somehow become flummoxed by a "shifting, inconsequential circuit of signs" of sexuality and commerce with "too few of them adding up"?¹²⁶ To put the point more crudely: Is our "Protesilaus Pudicus" a visual analogue to the game of sophistic self-performance?

For sophists like Herodes, qualities such as body type, depilation, dress, voice, and gait were of fundamental importance in the performance of gender and its power to shape the opinion of public and private audiences alike. Indeed, as Lucian mentions explicitly in his essay *On the Dance*, rhetoric itself could be seen as an elaborate form of pantomime in which the world itself was the stage, and the show was never-ending: "But in Pantomime, as in rhetoric, there can be (to use a popular phrase) too much of a good thing; a man may exceed the proper bounds of imitation; what should be great may become monstrous, softness may be exaggerated into effeminacy, and the courage of a man into the ferocity of a beast."¹²⁷ This danger was perilously situated on the knife's edge between greatness and depravity, as Lucian had remarked just earlier: "But let me tell you in conclusion what is particularly to be commended in our dancers: that they cultivate equally both strength and suppleness of limb seems to me as amazing as if the might of Heracles and the daintiness of Aphrodite were to be manifested in the same person."¹²⁸

Keeping in mind Lucian's suggestive image of Heracles-Aphrodite while turning back to the Vatican sarcophagus, it is difficult to resist seeing Protesilaus in the guise of Venus as anything but a rhetorical and theatrical mixture of these sexual personae that teeter on the brink of social acceptability. Indeed, if the extreme scarcity of Protesilaus sarcophagi has anything to do with the suitability or appropriateness of the

myth, then it is surely less about its generally depressing tenor and more about the degree to which one was willing to suffer the potential consequences of resignification. In this regard, our “Protesilaus Pudicus” betrays a similar, yet inverted, display of subversive identification seen in a later Severan funerary statue of a Roman matron in the guise of Omphale, the Lydian queen to whom Hercules was forced to submit in one of his labors (and, adding insult to injury, exchange his lion skin and club for her feminine garments). Complicating matters further is the fact that Omphale, dressed in Hercules’s clothes, is herself adopting the modest pose of the Venus Pudica (fig. 3.18).

Kampen has usefully characterized the plainly and sexually transgressive stakes of this rare but remarkable monument as both a visualization and a materialization of the “instability of gender.”¹²⁹ In a rejoinder to Kampen, Paul Zanker dismissed these transgressive aspects of Omphale’s sexuality, claiming that they were “turned off” and suppressed in favor of a purified form of feminine, ideal beauty.¹³⁰ But in the end, Zanker’s charge against Kampen’s “excessive psychologizing” of the statue seems less convincing, as it begs certain key questions about why such a potentially “dangerous” heroine would be selected as a model for the deceased in the first place.¹³¹ Citing as evidence the thousands of grave inscriptions that we possess in which husbands testify to the devotion, beauty, and piety of their loyal wives, Zanker reasons that it would be inconceivable for the statue of Omphale to signify anything else than a stronger version of those qualities. And yet the point seems to be precisely that the Omphale statue is *not* like those thousands of formulaic funerary inscriptions. Clearly, the deceased as Omphale-Hercules-Venus operates in a semantic field that is broader in its scope than a simple equation with an emasculating dominatrix allows. But the instability of gender is just that—an *instability*, rather than an essentialization, of the gendered self.

With respect to Protesilaus, therefore, it took an extremely sophisticated person who knew *exactly* what they were doing in order to manage the strength and suppleness of the two models in question and to negotiate their possible field of meanings. Herodes himself, as we learn from some passages in Aulus Gellius as well as the final couplet on the Marathon arch, was a vocal proponent of such an instability, at least as it related to the gendered work of mourning and the productive tension between rationality and the passions of the baser senses. Eschewing the emotional restraint of the Stoics, he even chastises a fictional and demonstrably incompetent farmer for cutting down his soft fruits along with the sharp thorns that grew among them.¹³² However tempting it might be to question the broader relevance of behavior in someone like Herodes, a sure outlier by any measure, the value in such an analysis surely comes not only from the intrinsic interest of such a patently odd individual, but also from the wealth of criticism his behavior provoked. So too, I submit, with the Vatican sarcophagus and its treatment of Protesilaus. Its statistical



Fig. 3.18 Portrait of a Roman woman as Omphale, ca. 200 CE. Marble. Museo Gregorio Profano, Vatican Museums. Photo: Author.

insignificance within the larger positivist project of the documentation of Roman mythological sarcophagi is *itself* the criterion of its significance in the ideology of mourning in the Roman world.

In his *Specters of Marx*, Derrida proposed that the specter presents us with an ineluctably ethical injunction insofar as it lies beyond the limits of our knowledge and experience.¹³³ For Derrida, as always, it was a problem of speech: “As theoreticians or witnesses, spectators, observers, and intellectuals, scholars believe that looking is sufficient. Therefore, they are not always in the most competent position to do what is necessary: speak to the specter.”¹³⁴ Maybe. But in the case of shame, where the beholder becomes subject to vision and must “respond to what deprives him of speech,” as Agamben puts it, it is also possible that looking could be sufficient after all, as it sometimes had to be. It is enough to recall that Alcestis, despite having returned from the dead at the end of the play, was nevertheless compelled to remain mute, her interaction with Admetus restricted to an irreducibly nonverbal, ocular communion.¹³⁵

This chapter has tracked some of the ways in which the iconography of the ghostly shroud—and in the case of Alcestis and Protesilaus, the veil or *chlamys* that is for all intents and purposes coextensive with it—operates at the very threshold of the seeing subject and the seeing world. Like the myths that shape and frame the contexts in which it appears, the shrouded ghost resists any fixed or delimited categories of interpretive possibility. It is semiotically labile in the fullest possible sense, hovering or wavering between the assumed polarities of male and female, active and passive, visible and invisible. It even casts into doubt, as we have seen with Admetus, the very distinction between life and death that no battery of physical tests could be called upon to prove. Moreover, as the case of Protesilaus and Laodamia shows in a particularly deft way, its relation to the work of mourning needn’t have been limited to the expression of pain and grief alone. Instead, it could work to transpose these emotions through a distinctively elegiac sensibility. The risk was that the imagery, like overwrought displays of grief, might result in spectacular instances of ignominious failure. But the thrill must have lain in the art of playfully testing its boundaries and constructing a visual undecidability that could do with pictures what the pantomime dancer or the sophist could do with his bodily gestures and speech.

Chapter Four

PHANTOMS IN THE FLESH

A body that we have never recognized as a body by touching it, or the corporeality of which we have not been able to establish by means of its similarity to other objects, would remain to us forever like the rings of Saturn or Jupiter, that is to say, a mere phenomenon, an *appearance*.

JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER, *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream* (1778)¹

One of the earliest depictions of Doubting Thomas in the history of art can be found on a late fourth- or early fifth-century sarcophagus located in a small chapel in the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli presso San Celso in Milan (fig. 4.1). Today it serves as the altar for the chapel that is normally quite dark, making the reliefs of the casket, which include scenes from the life of Christ beginning with the Nativity up to the post-Resurrection appearance of Christ to Thomas and one of the other apostles, nearly impossible to see. Physical access to the sarcophagus/altar is similarly thwarted by a low balustrade and locked gate. To see the reliefs, still from behind the marble and wrought-iron threshold, one first has to find a priest who is able to adjust the lights of the chapel on a touchscreen control panel



Fig. 4.1 Sarcophagus with scenes of the life of Christ, late fourth/early fifth century CE. Marble. Santa Maria dei Miracoli presso San Celso, Milan. Photo: Author.

in the sacristy. A recessed light located under the lip of the altar provides an ideal, if patently artificial, way of observing the imagery under the conditions of raking light. Here then, at last, one can discern the salient detail of the apostle's desire to verify the bodily reality of Christ's Resurrection—and the wound in his flank that serves as its guarantee—with his probing finger. The result, however, is a surprising anticlimax (see fig. 4.4). For in fact Thomas's finger fails to penetrate the wound, completely missing its mark. The deflated irony of the scene is almost as delicious as that upon seeing the laminated placard hanging over the edge of the imagery for would-be trespassers: "*Non toccare*," it reads under a red international prohibition sign covering an illustrated finger. "*Do not touch*."

The modern condition of the San Celso sarcophagus—the way it toggles between actual and potential states of visibility and invisibility, tangibility and intangibility—offers a context for this chapter, which examines the iconography of embodied perception on the two earliest depictions of the Doubting Thomas episode in the Christian tradition around the turn of the fifth century CE. In addition to the one from San Celso, a slightly earlier one made of so-called African onyx, intended to contain the remains of Saints Faustinus and Jovita, now resides in the Brescia Museum of Santa Giulia and has been dated as early as the mid-fourth century.² It cannot be a coincidence, I suggest, that this iconography first appears on sarcophagi whose eponymous function as "flesh-eating" containers of the deceased makes them especially evocative and well-suited objects to address certain matters of faith and flesh in Christian doctrine.³ Indeed, the sarcophagi do not simply address or even thematize these matters: they *materialize* the theological stakes of embodiment in objects whose very making constitutes an act of embodiment.

The history of embodiment in classical antiquity is arguably bookended by two major events. The first is the historical emergence of the body itself as an intellectu-

ally available concept. As Brooke Holmes has recently argued, the seemingly apodictic and self-evident notion in the European tradition that we even “have” bodies is in fact a novel feature of fifth- and fourth-century BCE medical texts.⁴ Here, for the first time, physicians begin to diagnose their patients by making inferences about the unseen interior of the body based on visible signs or symptoms. Then and only then, she asserts, does embodiment truly usher in a “new way of being in the world,” in the sense that the ground of felt-experience is established by the boundaries of a visible and tangible body susceptible to new techniques of control. This contrasts with archaic modalities of experience in the Homeric world in which the boundaries of a person are wholly continuous with the unseen realm of gods, daemons, and external forces in the form of spears that “desire” to pierce flesh or an arrow “freighted with dark pains.”⁵ Another crucial turning point in the history of embodiment can be located on the other end of the historical spectrum in the late antique milieu of Latin Christianity. Drawing on the writings of Tertullian and other Church Fathers, Georges Didi-Huberman identifies the emergence of a new Christian aesthetic—an “imaginary mode . . . dominated by the problematic of the Incarnation”—that predates, but directly informs, both early and later Christian art.⁶ On the one hand, it is deeply suspicious of the world of appearances (idolatry being a case in point); on the other, it acknowledges the mystery of the Incarnation whereby the divine Word is made flesh in the body of Jesus Christ and thereby partakes in the visible world. Grafting the paradoxes of the Incarnation onto the paradoxes of painting and of figuration more generally, particularly those cases of “representational failure” that threaten to dissolve into their material stuff, Didi-Huberman insists that what is at stake in each case is not the *merely* visible in the sense of a displayed object, much less the invisible (since it is seen). Rather, it is the “symptomization of the visible world” that teeters on the knife’s edge between phenomenological and semiological perspectives and modes of interpretation.⁷

In her landmark study of pain and embodiment that covers a discursive grid of religion, politics, medicine, philosophy, and literature, Elaine Scarry argues that pain is unique in the whole sensorium of human experience in that it has no object in the external world.⁸ Unlike sight, touch, hearing, smell, or taste, which attend to objects and their effects in the external world that exist beyond the limits of the body, pain is “objectless” and cannot be objectified. It even resists being expressed in language. As a corollary to this, Scarry suggests that the faculty of the imagination is conversely unique in that it exclusively comprises objects (hence the image of the arrow “freighted with dark pains” in Homer). Through processes of mental and material modes of making, she argues, the inanimate stuff of artifacts or made objects can be treated as though they were projections of our bodies.⁹ These projections (which she elsewhere calls “images” or “pictures”) can be formulated in three distinct ways that move from an external to an increasingly internal relation-

ship to the body: first, as a prosthesis that mirrors the morphology of the body or body part itself (e.g., bandages and clothing); second, as an external manifestation of certain bodily capacities or needs such as memory (e.g., photographs, films, tape recordings); and third, as the experience of sentience itself.¹⁰ The last of these, she claims, aims at nothing less than the striving to make the nonsentient objects of the external world responsible to their sentient inhabitants. Crucially—and this is what seems to set her argument apart from many of the various “New Materialisms” that have emerged in the intervening years—she insists that “To say that the ‘inanimateness’ of the external world is diminished, is *almost* to say (but is *not* to say) that the external world is made animate.”¹¹ Scarry’s brush with, but significant disavowal of, animism cashes out in her example of a chair that could be formulated in the first sense of a projection as a mimesis of the spine; in the second as the accommodation or distribution of body weight; but also in the third as the felt-experience of sentience. In this last formulation, the chair is “the materialized structure of a perception; it is sentient awareness materialized into a freestanding design.”¹² In turn, Scarry asserts, there is a reciprocity between the act of projecting a perception about human sentience onto an object and the way in which the object leverages this action to refer back to the human subject: “the degree to which the object *disembodies* or recreates the human makers will ordinarily greatly exceed the degree of heightened aversive *embodiment* required by the projective act of creating the object.”¹³

It is important that Scarry foregrounds her discussion of the structural relationship between objecthood and embodiment with an extended meditation on the New Testament’s thematic of the Incarnation. Not only does God now have a body, but it is a body that is predicable, describable, and indeed, figurable. Taking up the evidentiary status of Christ’s body and its susceptibility to vision and touch in the Doubting Thomas episode, Scarry observes that “An act of representation is an act of embodiment. Christ is himself embodied in the scriptures, long before any visual representations of him. But it is also interesting that centuries of visual representations have made Christ’s embodiment more prominent, have made it their central content.”¹⁴ Curiously, Scarry fails to mention any visual representations of Doubting Thomas, but of course she doesn’t have to: Caravaggio’s *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1601–1602) (plate 4.1) offers what is surely one of the most sensuous and sensational dramas of the flesh in the history of the subject.¹⁵ In a recent study of Caravaggio, Michael Fried has recently evoked the ways in which this picture thematizes the body not only of course in its iconography—the celebrated detail of Christ guiding Thomas’s finger into his own wound, the expressions of amazement this act elicits, and so on—but also in its very format, a horizontal rectangle whose dimensions (107 x 46 centimeters) “make possible an extraordinary authoritative close-range illusion of bodily presence.”¹⁶ For Fried, these are the conditions that

constitute *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* as a “paradigm of absorption” in the painter’s oeuvre. So too, I suggest, do the sarcophagi take up and indeed establish an iconography of absorptive states of attention. They do, of course, in markedly different ways than does Caravaggio. According to Scarry’s rubric of projection, both Caravaggio’s picture and the sarcophagi imitate the dimensions of the body. Yet the dimensions of the body are imitated in contrasting orientations—one vertical, the other horizontal—that highlight a crucial difference: namely, that the sarcophagi also fulfill the second formulation of bodily projection, that of bodily capacities or needs (in this case the need to distribute the weight of the corpse horizontally in a supine position).¹⁷ Indeed, this functional aspect of the sarcophagi has important ramifications for the ways in which they bring the felt-experience of sentience to bear (what Scarry might describe as a vertiginous iconography of “the structure of the act of perception visibly enacted”).

The San Celso sarcophagus illustrates the epistemological stakes of this difference. According to tradition, the body of Celsus was discovered by Saint Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan and Saint Augustine’s teacher, in 395 CE, which fits neatly with the dating of the sarcophagus on more stylistic grounds. Given the fact that Ambrose wrote extensively on the tremendous importance of physical relics for the needs of the faithful, it seems fitting that the iconography of Doubting Thomas might make one of its first appearances on a sarcophagus that functioned in practice as a readymade reliquary. For any regular member of the laity, perhaps, the emphasis on faith and the promise of future resurrection epitomized by the Thomas scene might have been difficult to resolve with the very function of a sarcophagus, given the ineluctable process of corporeal decay that unfolds unseen on the other side of the stone surface. The bodies of saints, however, belonged to an altogether different category of Christian materiality and, indeed, objecthood.¹⁸ Miraculously preserved in one way or another, their corporeal remains were somehow subject to, and constituted by, different standards of proof.

Without delving into the specific problems relating to the cult of the saints, my interest in the iconography of the Thomas scene takes up this more general question of “standards of proof” and its relation to issues of embodiment.¹⁹ The scope of this chapter thus extends beyond the limits of the scriptural basis of the Thomas episode to consider how its iconography fits within a broader tradition of Christian apologetics on the one hand, and its rather unexpected indebtedness to the classicizing sensibilities of the late antique intellectual and artistic climate on the other. The bulk of scholarly attention to the latter has been devoted to the syntactical structure of “typological exegesis” in early Christian art whose verbal and visual citations of the Old Testament past served in a largely rhetorical fashion to constitute and thus reveal itself in Christ’s Incarnation and Passion in the present.²⁰ In my view, however, the Thomas scenes on these sarcophagi instead deviate from and

even undercut the standard Christian practice of pressing typology into the service of allegorizing exegesis. What they do instead, I suggest, is raise a broader set of epistemological questions occasioned by Christ's post-Resurrection appearance: Was Christ *really* raised from the dead? Or was it just a ghost or a phantom that appeared to the apostles? More important still, how was it possible to make such a determination? To answer these questions, I wish to focus, as did Thomas, on the materiality of Christ's wound and its capacity to register the structure of embodied perception by figuring it as a constitutively phenomenological encounter of *seeing feeling*. In doing so, I argue that it foregrounds for both Thomas and the viewer alike a set of decidedly philosophical matters of criteria, evidence, and judgment.

SEEING FEELING

Before turning to the visual evidence of the sarcophagi, let us take a closer look at the passage in John (20:24–29), who is the only one of the evangelists to raise and then leave open to doubt what is unquestionably the most salient detail of the story, namely that Thomas's doubt could only be satisfied by *tactile*, rather than visual, evidence:

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them "Unless I see in his hands the print (*tupos*) of the nails, and place my finger in the mark (*tu-pos*) of the nails, and put (*ballein*) my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it into my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

As Glenn Most has argued, John's account sets up a "narrative aporia" in the sense that Jesus submits to Thomas's desire for physical proof, inviting the apostle to poke through the yawning tear in his flank, yet inexplicably concludes by yoking belief with sight, leaving unmentioned the critical sense of touch.²¹ This stands in stark contrast to the other gospels. In Luke, for example, we read of the apostles that (24: 37–39): "They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost (*pneuma*). He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'" This time the proof was in the pudding,

or rather a piece of broiled fish, which Jesus requested from the apostles and conspicuously devoured in their stunned presence.

For Most, the aporia in John's idiosyncratic account is satisfactorily resolved by Jesus's suggestion that His body *could* be touched, even if its materiality is never explicitly proved. For others, however, the mention of touch is unnecessary because it is implied in the language-games pertaining to the faculty of sight, itself a constitutively embodied form of experience that combined both optical and tactile modes according to various theoretical accounts.²² The rationale for the latter view turns out to have a strong basis in patristic thought. Grappling with the same issue in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (121.5), written in the first quarter of the fifth century, Augustine turned his attention to the problem of language in order to assert that sight can be implicated in virtually all of our descriptions of sensory experience. This is what makes it possible, he maintains, for us to utter meaningful expressions such as "See how good this tastes!" Hence Augustine considered the possibility that the same might have held true for Christ: when he said, "Put your finger here, and see my hands" what he really meant was something more along the lines of, "Come and see how this feels." "And yet," Augustine says of Thomas, "he had no eyes in his finger."²³

Perhaps not, but Augustine's evocative, if disquieting, image of a seeing finger nonetheless crystallizes the pervasive conviction in antiquity that vision is a thoroughly embodied activity.²⁴ Unlike the later Cartesian account of vision as an entirely disembodied, mechanical operation (one that could be seen to occur in the eye of a dead cow or a recently dead man), the ancients broadly conceived of vision as a quasi-touching in the form of visual rays or flux emanating out from the eye (the extramissionist model of vision) or else in the form of evanescent films sloughed off from objects that impinge the eye and cause vision (the intromissionist model).²⁵ Crucially, Thomas's stated desire to "see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails," is rife with such haptic allusions to visual perception. Both "print" and "mark" here are given as *tupos* in Greek, a word that Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers used to describe the process of perception using the metaphor of a seal-ring whose design is thrust into a malleable wax substrate in order to create an impression (*phantasia*).²⁶ Indeed, the connection to this metaphor is practically made explicit in Thomas's desire to verify the print of the nail with his finger (*daktylos*), given its connection to a "finger-ring" (*daktylion*). Finally, there is the striking use of the verb *ballein* to describe the action of inserting his hand into Christ's flank. Rather than using a verb like *haptomai*, which has the sense of grasping or putting one's hands *on* something, *ballein* typically has the sense of throwing or hurling something with penetrative force.²⁷ Here too, the links to the physical force of vision are suggestive: in Aeschylus, for example, the same verb is used to describe Iphigenia shooting piteous glances from her eyes at each of



Fig. 4.2 Sarcophagus with scenes of the life of Christ, mid-fourth century CE. African onyx. Museo di Santa Giulia, Brescia. Photo: Author.

her sacrificers.²⁸ Seeing and touching are thus thoroughly intertwined, synesthetic modalities of perception.

Augustine's remarks also invite us to consider what it really means to "see feeling" when the evidence in question comprises depictions, rather than language. Produced shortly before Augustine composed the *Tractates*, the sarcophagi are remarkable not least because they anticipate and make visible a number of Augustine's claims outlined above. In the case of the San Celso sarcophagus, we have already seen that Thomas does not explicitly touch Christ's wound. Indeed, he does not even appear to inspect it. His gaze, as with the other apostle to his left, is rather directed up toward Christ's face. On the Brescia sarcophagus, however, it is practically impossible to determine whether Thomas in fact touches Christ's wound because of the mesmerizing materiality of onyx and its resistance to the close-up gaze (fig. 4.2).²⁹ The fact that both sarcophagi usher in the faculty of sight and its constitutively haptic qualities through an onlooker who stands alongside Thomas only draws further attention to this problem and makes it explicit.³⁰ And yet, unlike the San Celso sarcophagus, both Thomas and the other apostle on the Brescia casket focus their attention on whatever is at the tip of his finger—whether it is in fact the wound or just a fold in Christ's garment—rather than on the visage of Christ himself (plate 4.2). The impossibility of discerning this crucial detail has an interesting genealogy in the Hellenistic aesthetic of refinement and excess (whether

in terms of scale or the materiality of objects exceeding their apprehension), particularly in relation to glyptics. In his third-century CE collection of epigrams on gemstones, for example, Posidippus describes the design of a seal-stone whose detail is so fine that “the chariot on it was engraved by the sharp eye of a Lynceus, like the mark on a nail: the chariot is seen incised but on the surface you could not notice any protrusions.”³¹ And then there is Plutarch’s anecdote that Cleopatra, by all accounts the very embodiment of excess and flamboyance, would send Mark Antony love letters inscribed on crystal and onyx tablets whose opulent materiality exceeded their legibility.³² As with Posidippus’s gem or Cleopatra’s love letters, the figures of the Brescia sarcophagus are similarly pushed to the brink of illegibility in a way that seems to invite tactile verification for what the eye alone cannot apprehend with certainty.

Indeed, the Brescia casket seems to be a sarcophagus that *wants* to be touched, that demands it of viewers whose eyes otherwise get lost in the wash of colored stone and its various mineral inclusions that has a natural semiotic quality.³³ Such an experience is both dramatized and materialized in the principal scene on the top register, which depicts the Crossing of the Red Sea (as it was called even in antiquity).³⁴ Here the variegated color of the stone itself evokes the Red Sea with its seasonal algal blooms that gather up on the surf in parallel bands of salty foam and blood-red bacteria. The stone further dissolves the distinctions between signifier and signified so that depictive strategies and the natural formation of the stone are engaged in an ongoing dialectic. One can just barely discern, for instance, how the chiseled marks representing the waves of the sea sometimes follow, sometimes push against, the stratified and undulating layers of chalcedony (onyx is itself a variety of this stone, which it features in stratified layers) (fig. 4.3).

But the onyx may have been suggestive for the Thomas scene as well, located on the bottom right of the lower register. For one thing, the name of the stone itself (*onux*), which in Greek means fingernail (the idea being that the onyx resembles its stacked bands of color). Hence, as Pliny notes, the name for sardonyx (used extensively in the making of cameos, for example) literally means “flesh superimposed on a human fingernail.”³⁵ This has suggestive potential for Thomas and the digital hermeneutics of the flesh, not least on a sarcophagus, an object whose very etymology designates it as a “flesh-eater.”³⁶ For if the tip of Thomas’s finger is precisely what is supposed to help him overcome his doubt, the choice to carve into onyx seems itself significant, recalling as it does the natural resemblance to the body, of stone to flesh. Indeed, the color of the Brescia sarcophagus, red and shot through with veins of white chalcedony, itself evokes the color of flesh and the marbling of fat in a thick slab of meat. Although white marble sarcophagi were normally painted or gilded in both pagan and Christian traditions, it is clear that the onyx was manifestly the



Fig. 4.3 Sarcophagus with scenes of the life of Christ (detail showing the Crossing of the Red Sea), mid-fourth century CE. African onyx. Museo di Santa Giulia, Brescia. Photo: Author.

object of aesthetic appreciation here. Onyx brings stone and flesh together, and in the case of the Brescia sarcophagus, it even goes so far as to stake a claim about the somatic status of the sarcophagus itself.

As Pliny reminds us, precious stones were profoundly sensuous objects. And it is precisely by the senses that they can also, like Christ's flesh, be subjected to a battery of physical tests. Besides their weight and structure, he says, precious stones can be verified by inserting them into one's mouth to take their temperature (genuine stones, he writes, are cooler to the taste).³⁷ Finally, there is the tantalizing association of onyx or fingernails with sculptural practice in general, namely in Polyclitus's saying that had passed into a proverb: "the task is hardest for those whose clay has reached the stage when they must use the fingernail."³⁸ The notion that onyx or fingernails accomplish what are quite literally the "finishing touches" of a sculpted work is suggestive indeed.³⁹ But if this is in fact the case, then we seem to move beyond the sculpted qualities of the marble sarcophagus to the more precarious comparison between the body of Christ and a statue, a comparison—as I shall argue in greater detail with regard to the better-preserved San Celso sarcophagus—that has a strong basis in the iconography itself.

AMAZONIAN ANALOGIES

The Thomas scene on the San Celso sarcophagus does not appear in isolation, but is rather situated within a broader set of paratactically arranged images relating to the life and post-Resurrection appearances of Christ (fig. 4.4). These include, from left to right on the front panel, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the *Traditio Legis* with Christ standing between Peter and Paul, the Easter morning visit of the women myrrh bearers at the Empty Tomb, and the Incredulity of Thomas. The short sides of the sarcophagus are likewise decorated: on the left, the woman with the issue of blood touches the edge of Christ's garment in order to cure her affliction; on the right, Peter strikes the rock in the Mamertine Prison from which water miraculously gushes forth, allowing him to conduct baptisms, a ritual of touch par excellence.⁴⁰ Salvation through physical contact thus unites the iconography of both sides, with Doubting Thomas standing in as the connective and chronological tissue between them. In this sense, the San Celso sarcophagus belongs very much to the tradition of typological exegesis. Needless to say, such rhetorical devices were not restricted to the juxtaposition of scenes from scripture. They could also be, and often were, adapted from a vast repertory of poses and gestures pertaining to figures from ideal sculpture, mythological narratives, or state-sponsored images of imperial ceremony in Roman art.⁴¹

Such is the case, I submit, with the Thomas scene on the San Celso sarcophagus (along with the fragmentary piece in Brescia), in which the figure of Christ offers a nearly exact citation of the famous "Sciarrà" type of Wounded Amazon traditionally credited to Polyclitus (fig. 4.5).⁴² Like the Amazon, Christ assumes a characteristically Polyclitan contrapposto, generating a narrative timelessness through its chiasmic oscillation between movement and stasis, action and passion. Most importantly from an iconographic point of view, Christ also gives his wound to be seen. With his right arm bent back over his head in order to offer a maximal view, he exposes his right flank in a sensuous fashion that satisfies the twinned desire for close inspection and visual pleasure. Later examples from the fifth century, extending well into the Middle Ages and beyond, employ yet another Wounded Amazon, the so-called "Sosikles" type, as the prototype for what would become an iconographic scheme in its own right, namely the *ostentatio vulnerum* (fig. 4.6 and plate 4.3). Together, the replica series of the Wounded Amazons serves as the principal model for the proof of Christ's post-Resurrection vulnerability.

There is a major potential for risk or irony in the sculptural referentiality of Christ's unmistakably Polyclitan pose. Polyclitus was most renowned for his mathematical system of proportions he called the *kanon*, meaning "rule" or "measure." He enshrined these ideas in a (now lost) treatise called the *Kanon* as well as in a statue—one that most scholars take to be his most famous work, the Doryphorus—that was



Fig. 4.4 Sarcophagus (detail showing Doubting Thomas), late fourth/early fifth century CE. Marble. Santa Maria dei Miracoli presso San Celso in Milan. Photo: Author.



Fig. 4.5 Statue of a Wounded Amazon ("Sciarra" type), first or second century CE. Marble. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Public domain.



Fig. 4.6 Statue of a Wounded Amazon (“Sosikles” type), first or second century CE. Marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome. Photo: Author.

called by the same name.⁴³ And yet, for all his prowess with human subjects, Polyclitus was specifically criticized for his treatment of divine subject matter. According to Quintilian, “critics award him the palm, but, in order to find some fault in him, judge that he lacks ‘weight,’ because, while he gave the human form a beauty transcending the reality, he seems not to have given adequate expression to the authority of the gods.”⁴⁴ Yet, given the paradoxical duality of Christ as both human *and* divine—the central mystery of the Incarnation—it is perhaps possible to see the Polyclitan pose as the perfect synthesis of a major theological issue.

At the same time, the reference to Polyclitus obtains in a potentially more direct way to Thomas’s doubt. One finds multiple references to the sculptor in the medical texts of Galen, for example, who saw the *kanon* as an excellent metaphor for the need to have experience not just with a handful of patients, but rather a great number of them in order to understand what constitutes the norm.⁴⁵ In his discussion of bodily mixtures—based on the widespread idea that the body comprises elemental qualities of hot, cold, dry, and wet—Galen underscores the importance of the sense of touch as one that is common to everyone, but requires careful training if it is to be used as a diagnostic tool.⁴⁶ Galen then compares the act of touching a patient to touching Polyclitus’s famous statue: “Only that which is like the Canon of Polyclitus reaches the acme of all balance so that, when touched, it seems neither hard nor soft, neither hot nor cold and, when looked at, it is neither hairy nor bare, neither thick nor thin, and has no other imbalance.”⁴⁷ Yet, even as Galen tends to privilege the empirical value of haptic observation, he concedes that touching alone is sometimes insufficient and must be accompanied with inferential modes of reasoning.

It is perhaps a testimony to this decidedly classical composition that its seeming opacity and even banality has rendered its pedigree almost completely invisible in the extensive bibliography on the iconography of the subject. Indeed, Glenn Most is one of the few scholars to have commented on the parallel, suggesting that its connotations of exhaustion and fatigue were exceptionally well suited to the figure of Christ, seeing this as a classic instance of Aby Warburg’s “pathos formula.”⁴⁸ Most does not elaborate on this connection to Warburg, but it is worth unpacking here. More than a simple visual citation, Warburg’s *Pathosformel*, which identified the physiognomic or gestural limits of bodily and psychically expressive states of being, was linked to his overarching interest in artistic *Nachleben* or “survivals.” Significantly, Warburg borrowed the latter term from the English anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, who coined it to describe the interweaving of cultural styles and historical forms of life. Didi-Huberman has described Tylor’s, and by extension Warburg’s, project as a “vertiginous play of time in the present,” a haunted history of ghostly remainders (again we may recall that Warburg himself called the history of art a *Gespenstergeschichte für ganz Erwachsene*, a “ghost story for grownups”).⁴⁹

Warburg's ideas about the relations between repetition/recurrence and embodiment offer tremendous potential for thinking about the sculptural referentiality on the San Celso sarcophagus. A profound, but hardly coincidental, irony has gone unnoticed here: namely, that Thomas is shown inspecting the wound of a figure he fears may be only a ghost, an empty image, yet whose very proof of material density is figured here as a sculptural quotation, another image. The fact that the image of Christ is sculpted in relief, a medium that combines the pictorial qualities of surface planes with the three-dimensional qualities of plastic form—long taken as emblematic of the dialectic between ideas or concepts and the phenomena of visual impressions—only serves to amplify the psychological aspect of embodied perception in this scene.⁵⁰ Thus it is not just Thomas who brings the layered textures of vision and touch to bear on the reality of Christ's resurrected body: the sculptor of the relief invokes these complementary modes of perception in a form that is all the more poignant because it makes reference to a famous sculpture in the round.

In an important sense, as we know from Pliny, the issues of sculptural repetition or referentiality and modes of aesthetic judgment were baked into the very conceit of a statue of a Wounded Amazon. He writes:

After thus defining the periods of the most famous artists, I will hastily run through those of outstanding distinction, throwing in the rest of the throng here and there under various heads. The most celebrated have also come into competition with each other, although born at different periods, because they had made statues of Amazons; when these were dedicated in the Temple of Artemis of Ephesus, it was agreed that the best one should be selected by the vote of the artists themselves who were present . . .⁵¹

The anachronistic juxtaposition of these masterpieces at Ephesus (that of Polyclitus being the most esteemed) must have been a sight to see, but it is one that was reproduced, and reproduced often, throughout the Roman world. At Hadrian's Villa, for example, at least two different Wounded Amazons were discovered in the same area of the Canopus so that the viewer could, like the Greek sculptors, compare their relative merits.⁵² Multiple pieces of ancient plaster copies of the Sciarra Amazon type have even been discovered at a sculptor's studio in the Bay of Naples, testifying to its significance in establishing ancient practices of sculptural repetition and concepts of reproducibility.⁵³

If we begin with the matter of sculptural repetition and referentiality, it seems important to ask why the sculptor might have modeled the Resurrected Christ on a Wounded Amazon in the first place when several other perfectly suitable *male* candidates were available for the choosing. It is easy enough to understand why a humiliated, exsanguinating barbarian such as the Dying Gaul might constitute a

poor choice, but why not a wounded warrior, a *volneratus deficiens* (fig. 4.7)?⁵⁴ One answer, I suspect, has something to do with the profoundly gendered and sensuous aspect of Thomas's encounter in the suggestion of a digital penetration of Christ's body, which offers its own resistance to the test of touch. In other words, the materiality of Christ's body must be borne out through its literal vulnerability, which in turn must be proved by its penetrability.⁵⁵ While the Latin elegists might have complained of love pains, it was not until the Middle Ages that devotional texts for women began to play quite explicitly on the pun between *vulva* and *vulnus* in order to demonstrate the theological and indeed *contractual* links between sexual activity with one's husband and a mystical union with God. If indeed the medieval feminization of Christ's body effectively queers that body, as Karma Lochrie has proposed, then in some sense the sarcophagi do so doubly.⁵⁶ For, since it was axiomatic that freeborn Roman male bodies be impenetrable, the Wounded Amazon, herself a quintessential example of gender instability, makes the penetrability of Christ at once permissible *and* transgressive, and in any event desirable.⁵⁷ And yet, it is important to stress that on the San Celso sarcophagus, at least, this question of penetrability was only suggested, rather than realized or made fully explicit.

This tension between looking and touching is crucial to the case of the Wounded Amazon and the iconography of the wound in general. One cannot help but wonder: Do Christ's wounds continue to bleed? Or, in the manner of a corpse in liver mortis, do they merely sit there in a state of suggillation—yawning, untreated, and bloodless? So far I have been concerned mainly with issues of typology, and in this case of the "Sciarra" type of Wounded Amazon as defined by its characteristic pose. And yet, the problem of the replica series that the type itself comprises is of the utmost importance when we consider its appropriateness to the Thomas scene in early Christian iconography. The simple reason is this: while some of the Amazons in the series have wounds from which marmoreal spurts of blood issue forth in low but definite relief, others in the series are missing these details entirely. Thus, in a marvelous historical irony, the doubt about the very existence of this wound played an intriguing role in Adolf Furtwängler's project of discerning Roman copies from their Greek originals (*Kopienkritik*). He writes:

The existence of the wound, as [Adolf] Michaelis correctly infers from the material at his disposal, can no longer be doubted. For the agreement of the copies makes it impossible to regard the wound, identically introduced in all, as a capricious addition of the copyists. That some of the copies omit the drops of blood is assuredly only because these were indicated by painting. In the bronze original they must have been rendered plastically. The bronze statue of the Chimera in Florence, whose antique Greek origin can now scarcely be doubted, has a wound-cut plastically indicated with drops of



Fig. 4.7 *Volneratus deficiens*, from the Baths of Caracalla, Rome, first or second century CE. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Photo: Museo Archeologico.

blood, precisely like the two wounded Amazons (on the lion body a drop of blood was even especially let in; it has now fallen out) . . .⁵⁸

Furtwängler's comments here are instructive for a number of reasons (not least the way in which they underscore the translation of media from bronze to marble, so often taken to be an index of the status of the latter as a copy in Roman art), but I would like to focus on a single concern of his, namely the question of how the blood or the wound relates to the body as a whole and indeed whether it "belongs" to it.

Thanks to the recent documentation of the "Sciarra" type of Wounded Amazon at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen using visible-induced luminescence imaging and microscopy, we now know that Furtwängler was right about the existence of painted blood (figs. 4.8 and 4.9).⁵⁹ What is at stake in this process of verification?⁶⁰ The scholarly tendency to infer the unseen by recourse to the specter of polychromy (even and especially if it is only scientifically verifiable) runs the risk of introducing a major methodological problem to the study of sculptural aesthetics. Simply put, the invocation of polychromy as an explanation for missing or invisible details tends to elide or flatten the differences between, say, drops of blood that have been painted on a smooth, continuous surface, and the modulating topography of sculpturally rendered drops of blood that have been painted in order to enhance their volumetric plasticity.⁶¹ Most confronts the stakes of the matter directly, albeit from the perspective of painted pictures: "If the image in question is painted and not sculpted, the impression of three-dimensionality necessary to convey to the viewer a representation of Jesus's wounds can only be the result of an optical illusion created by the painter's technical skill upon the two-dimensional surface of the canvas: an artistic illusion must convince us of a redemptive truth."⁶² But what happens when the image in question is both sculpted *and* painted?

In the case of the Wounded Amazon—and by way of analogy, I would argue, the iconography of Christ on the sarcophagi—the question of whether the blood or even the wound "belongs" to the sculpture, as Furtwängler pondered, recalls Immanuel Kant's concept of the parergon, defined as "what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object."⁶³ Kant's examples of parerga, ornaments, included such things as frames and the draperies of statues. But what about blood and wounds? Once the blood is on the outside of the figure, rather than on the inside—leaving aside for the moment the question of whether it is simply painted or both sculpted and painted—it runs the risk of becoming ornamental in its lurid plasticity. Even before Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder had warned that excessive attention to detail on the subcutaneous surface of sculpture, if not softened, produces a grotesque sensation such that "the silent sense of touch that feels things in the dark will register the veins as wriggling worms



Fig. 4.8 Marble Statue of a Wounded Amazon (“Sciarra” type), first or second century CE. Copenhagen: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (inv. no. 1568). Photo: Maria Louise Sargent.

and the cartilage as protruding growths.”⁶⁴ Moreover, color itself was pernicious for Herder not only because it was ugly (according to the aesthetic values of the time), but also for the simpler reason that “color is not form, because it cannot be detected by the eye that is closed or the hand that touches.”⁶⁵

The wound occupies a disquieting middle ground in this dialectic of surface and depth, exteriority and interiority. On this score, I suggest, the dilemma of Thomas’s doubt on the sarcophagi resides in, and indeed is constituted by, this very question about the logic of the supplement. For Jacques Derrida, in his critique of Kant’s parergon, the ornamental or the supplemental is not extrinsic to the work; rather, he argues, the two are mutually implicated.⁶⁶ Attention to issues of sculptural facture brings out the significance of Derrida’s argument. Unlike the wound on the Wounded Amazon, which is made through a sculptural process of subtraction, the plastically rendered blood is achieved by reserving part of the stone. Yet it is impor-



Fig. 4.9 Detail of the Copenhagen Wounded Amazon with visible-induced infrared luminescence. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (inv. no. 1568). Photo: Maria Louise Sargent.

tant to stress that the process of sculpting a wound is only subtractive in a dense material like marble. The fragmentary torso of an archaic fifth-century Amazon in terracotta discovered on the Esquiline offers a compelling contrast (plate 4.4).⁶⁷ Here the blood issues forth in stylized rivulets that echo the symmetrical designs of the painted fabric (indeed, one almost fails to notice the blood as blood). In this case, the wound itself is not achieved by means of subtraction, as with the stone sculpture, but rather a slice into the moist fabric of the pre-fired clay such that it endures the violence of this cut like the body it represents. The mimesis of the wound in the terracotta Amazon is thus mimetic not only in a representational sense, but also in a structural one. By contrast, the marble statue of the Wounded Amazon, although it does involve the idea of doing violence to a body, is chiefly interested in techniques of illusion. Redemptive truth is thus brought to bear not in the “reality” of the sculpted image as opposed to the deceptive picture, but indeed, in the double deception of polychrome sculpture.

THE SPECTER OF IDOLATRY

Now at this point, a reasonable question might be raised about the extent to which the Wounded Amazon even mattered by the fourth and fifth centuries, when the sarcophagi from Brescia and Milan were produced. A suggestive case in point lies in the Wounded Amazon from Ecija, the modern city in Spain corresponding to the ancient colony of Astigi, located in the province of Baetica (plate 4.5). Discovered just over a decade ago, the statue—a first-century CE copy of the Sciarra-type Amazon—was found intact and in an exceptional state of preservation, including much of its original polychromy, as seen on the head, the dress, and even the column support.⁶⁸ Intriguingly, the statue was excavated in the *natatio* of a bathing complex that had fallen into disuse by the fourth century, along with a host of other pieces of ideal sculpture and inscribed plaques that were tossed into the pool up through the fifth century. More intriguing still is the strong likelihood that the statue was intentionally buried in order to preserve it. Unlike the mass of fragments of other sculptures that had later been randomly thrown into the pool, the Amazon, which comes from a fourth-century deposit where it was broken at the ankles and wrists, was carefully arranged in such a way that her bodily fragments were arranged according to their anatomically correct positions.⁶⁹ Given the fact that Christianity emerged in Baetica at precisely this moment, when the Council of Iliberris declared war on idolatry, the excavator has persuasively argued that the Ecija Amazon was purposefully stowed away in order to protect it from an outbreak of iconoclasm during the fourth century.⁷⁰

What made idols so dangerous? As Tertullian argued in his *De idololatria*, written in the second century CE, the primary charge was the grave possibility that they harbored ghosts and demons that subsisted on, and were constituted by, the base materiality of images.⁷¹ But once again, everything hinges on his subtle but crucial qualification of possibility. It was not that *every* image was possessed by spirits, but the possibility that they *could* be, and that it would be very difficult indeed to tell the difference between the ones that were from the ones that weren't. This is why, in a somewhat paradoxical fashion, the pernicious materiality of idols is ultimately immaterial:

For it makes no difference whether a modeler forms the idol, an engraver chisels it out or an embroiderer weaves it, because it is also not important whether the idol is made of gypsum or colors or stone or bronze or silver or thread. For even without an idol there may be idolatry, certainly, when the idol is present, its material and formal nature makes no difference, lest one should think that only that must be regarded as an idol which has been consecrated in human shape.⁷²

It is no coincidence that Tertullian never quite clearly defines what an idol *is* in his treatise, for his exhaustive and overdetermined list of possibilities—a common feature of Christian apologetics—gives us what is perhaps an even more interesting methodological premise. Namely, if I may borrow from Justice Potter Stewart's famous threshold test for obscenity, that idolatry is somehow like pornography: Tertullian knew it when he saw it.

But what does it mean to “see” a statue as an idol as opposed to a harmless mass of stone or clay or bronze? How, to borrow the language of Whitney Davis's historical phenomenology, does the idol “succeed to pictoriality” for some agents while remaining a “mere picture” for others?⁷³ One of the most seductive explanations from antiquity comes from the Stoics, who took up the question of how it is that we think we can make logical inferences about material causes from their material effects.⁷⁴ Their position is relayed by Sextus Empiricus in his second-century treatise, *Against the Physicists*:

If you saw a statue which was well wrought, would you be in doubt as to whether an artistic intelligence had made it? Or would you not be so far from having any such suspicions that you would actually admire the excellence of its workmanship and its artistic quality? If then, in such cases, when you behold the external form you take it as evidence of a constructor and assert that there exists a craftsman who made it—when you see the mind within yourself, which is so far superior in its intricacy to any statue or painting, do you suppose that it came into being as the creation of chance and not by some craftsman possessed of power and intelligence to a superlative degree? And he can dwell nowhere else save in the Universe, governing it and generating and increasing the things that are therein. And this person is a God; therefore Gods exist.⁷⁵

I shall return to the Stoics momentarily, but at this juncture I simply wish to underscore the importance of this tremendous comparison between bodies and statues as a means of deriving first principles about the generation or fabrication of each. To be sure, the Stoic God is not the God of Tertullian or John or Thomas. And yet it is precisely this kind of stoicizing logic that deeply informed the Christian apologists and their attempts to illustrate the mystery of the Incarnation. A particularly evocative example can be found in Origen's *De principiis*, written in the third century:

For instance, suppose that there were a statue of so enormous a size as to fill the whole world, and which on that account could be seen by no one; and that another statue were formed altogether resembling it in the shape of the limbs, and in the features of the countenance, and in form and material, but without the same immensity of size, so that those who were unable to behold the one of enormous proportions, should,

on seeing the latter, acknowledge that they had seen the former, because it preserved all the features of its limbs and countenance, and even the very form and material, so closely, as to be altogether undistinguishable from it; by some such similitude, the Son of God, divesting Himself of His equality with the Father, and showing to us the way to the knowledge of Him, is made the express image of His person: so that we, who were unable to look upon the glory of that marvelous light when placed in the greatness of His Godhead, may, by His being made to us brightness, obtain the means of beholding the divine light by looking upon the brightness.⁷⁶

Origen's sculptural analogy is powerful, if spectacularly inappropriate to the matter at hand. And Origen knew it, which is why he immediately followed up his suggestion with the caveat that "This comparison, of course, of statues belonging to material things, is employed for no other purpose than to show that the Son of God, though placed in the very insignificant form of a human body, in consequence of the resemblance of His works and power to the Father, showed that there was in Him an immense and invisible greatness . . ."⁷⁷ If we think back to the sarcophagi, and if we accept that the poses of Christ in the Thomas scenes are purposefully, if tacitly, statuesque in their conception, then I would argue that Origen allows us to go a step further and consider the possibility that the imagery itself invites us to imagine how, like Thomas, we might gain access to understanding the revealed truth of the Resurrection.⁷⁸

What would later make Origen's position so dangerous and untenable (his writings were eventually condemned by the mid-sixth century) was his attempt to reconcile the materiality of Christ's body with the unambiguous assertion in the gospel that the resurrected Jesus was evidently able to pass through solid doors.⁷⁹ In order to account for this, Origen suggested that after the Resurrection, Christ was "as it were in a certain intermediate state between the density of his body before the Passion and the manifestation of a soul deprived of this sort of body."⁸⁰ Returning to Thomas, the question of his doubt, therefore, was of the utmost importance. In his polemic against the pagan Celsus regarding this issue, Origen writes:

"After his death," Celsus thinks, "Jesus used to produce only a mental impression (*phantasia*) of the wounds he received on the cross, and did not really appear wounded in this way." But according to the account in the gospel, of which Celsus believes the parts he wants to believe where it helps his criticisms, while he disbelieves the other parts, Jesus called to himself one of the disciples who did not believe and thought the miracle to be impossible. For he accepted the statement of the woman that she had seen him, as it was not impossible that the soul of a dead man should have been seen; but he did not yet think it was true that he had been raised in a body exactly like that which he had had before. On this account he said: "Unless I see, I will not believe,"

and even went on to say, “Unless I thrust my hand into the print (*tupos*) of the nails and touch his side, I will not believe.” This was said by Thomas because he thought that it was possible for the physical eyes to see the body of the soul in a form in every aspect like its former shape, *In stature and beautiful eyes and voice*, and often *Having the same garments about the skin*.

But Jesus called Thomas to him and said: “Reach hither your finger and see my hands; and reach hither your hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless but believing.”⁸¹

While there is much to unpack in his response to Celsus, I only wish to linger for a while on Origen’s insistence that Thomas would not have been shocked to see the ghost of a dead man. Indeed, this is partly why Origen quotes Homer’s famous lines (italicized) from Book 23 of the *Iliad* in which Achilles sees the ghost of Patroclus in a dream.⁸²

The rationale for Origen’s citation goes deeper than any generic sort of superstition or poetic license. As we already saw in the gospel of John, the language of sense-perception (particularly that of the imprint/impression: *tupos* and *phantasia*) keys into significant issues in the philosophical understanding of Thomas’s doubt. For Plato and Aristotle, the experience of *phantasia* and the metaphor of the wax impression that illustrated it was akin to what we might now call “mental impressions” that allow us to form mental concepts from a given body of sense-data. In a decidedly material sense, then, *phantasia* accounts for the buildup of sensory impressions on the soul that receives and registers them. For the Stoics, who believed in the irreducible materiality of the universe and its governance by an all-pervading and all-powerful divine Providence, sense-perception was deemed to be the very window through which one might know that universe and his place within it.⁸³ Accordingly, they held that *phantasia* established the criterion of truth that sets us on the way to real knowledge. The problem with *phantasia*, they recognized, is that we can experience both impressions of things that *are* true, and impressions of things that may *not* be true. In order to distinguish between them, the Stoics posited what they called a *phantasia kataleptike*, a “clear and distinct impression,” which functioned as a criterion of truth insofar as it distinguished not only seeing from believing, but also believing from knowing (crucially, this was the skill of the Stoic sage, and not an everyday form of sensory engagement with the world by ordinary people).⁸⁴

Pyrrhonian skepticism was allergic to the very idea that such a level of certitude was possible.⁸⁵ Setting out to dismantle the Stoic position that the “clear and distinct impression” could constitute a criterion of truth (indeed, the Pyrrhonian procedure was largely occupied by a relentless critique of criteria), Sextus Empiricus recapitulates the Stoic position along with the various riders they had added

on to shore up their arguments. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sextus used the phenomenon of ghost-seeing as a compelling illustration of the skeptical procedure. For Admetus, who believes Alcestis to be dead and thus repeatedly refuses Hercules's entreaties to bring the veiled figure into his home, unbelief, or perhaps a suspension of judgment, was the reasonable response to an improbable situation. Yet, Admetus cannot be the only one who doubts his good fortune. The fact that Euripides presents a seemingly joyful denouement to the drama but pointedly refuses to let Alcestis speak introduces at least the possibility that the audience might doubt her successful resurrection as well. From a skeptical perspective, Alcestis's resurrection indeed might be plausible, perhaps even tested, but by no means incontrovertible.

Considered according to the logic of Stoic philosophy, Origen's account invites us to reflect on whether in fact Thomas saw a "clear and distinct impression" of Christ that could count as a criterion of truth, or whether the logical or physical obstacles (e.g., the fact that he was dead like Alcestis, or his mysterious bypassing of the closed door) would have precluded such a possibility. If it was indeed a "clear and distinct impression" of Christ, and Thomas assented to it, then he could reasonably be said to have real knowledge of Christ's Resurrection. On this point, it is worth recalling Augustine's stoicizing assertion that "belief itself is nothing else than to think with assent."⁸⁶ The hardest part about making such an assertion, Sextus asserts, has to do with the daunting problem of indistinguishability. In these cases, he says, an appearance that arises from something that is *not* real may be indistinguishable from an appearance that arises from something that *is* real because each one is "found equally plain and striking, while an indication of being equally striking and plain is the fact that the corresponding actions are connected with them."⁸⁷ Among the examples he offers are twins (Thomas being one, as John casually, yet pointedly, mentions in his gospel) and the slippage between dreams and waking life, whereupon he proceeds to cite the lines from the moment when Achilles has woken up with a start just after seeing the ghost of Patroclus.

PUTTING THE GHOST TO THE PROOF

Up to this point I have considered only the question of visual evidence as it pertains to the iconography of the Wounded Amazon and its referentiality on the Brescia and Milan sarcophagi. In this final section, I explore a heterogeneous set of discourses and depictive practices with different stakes and claims, ranging from epic verse and declamatory prose to the material conditions of manuscript illumination. What they share in common, I argue, is a singular focus on the evidentiary status of

the wound and the process by which it attained a demonstrably forensic standing that “interpenetrated” between these different modes of thought.

Once again, the case of Patroclus is instructive. Origen’s comparison of Thomas seeing the resurrected body of Christ to Achilles seeing the ghost of Patroclus, as we saw in the last section, draws on a fundamental distinction of tactile experience and proof: whereas Achilles was left embracing nothing but empty air—the ghost of his beloved eluding his grasp like a fleeting shadow or a dream—Thomas, who expected the body of Christ to be similarly insubstantial, ostensibly touched, even *probed*, the viscera of his savior. At bottom, it is a distinction of desire thwarted and fulfilled. The quotations from Homer’s famous scene in both Origen and Sextus Empiricus demonstrate the wide range of this *locus classicus* in ancient thought—one that may well have been illustrated in the margins of ancient texts. Ironically, the only ancient depiction of the scene survives in tattered fragments: among the copious scraps of papyrus uncovered at a rubbish heap at Oxyrynchus in Egypt, a second-century CE copy of the *Iliad* in Greek shows the figure of Achilles between corresponding columns of text, arms stretched, presumably reaching for the shade of Patroclus, now missing in a double frustration (plate 4.6).⁸⁸

Whereas Homer describes the oneiric vision of Patroclus as “in all things like his very self (*auto*), in stature and fair eyes and voice,” and moreover that “like (*eikuia*) were the clothes that he wore about his body,” earlier visual evidence for the ghost of Patroclus presents a compelling contrast by focusing on the young hero’s ravaged body.⁸⁹ On the front panel of a third-century BCE Etruscan stone sarcophagus from Torre San Severo, Achilles dispatches one of the Trojan prisoners as the ghost of Patroclus supervises the sacrifice behind him (fig. 4.10).⁹⁰ The depiction is similar to a contemporary painting of the same scene in the François Tomb at Vulci, but a number of details on the casket serve to emphasize the corporeality of the various persons involved. Here Patroclus does not merely observe the slaughter as he does in the François Tomb, but also stokes the fire for his own pyre, over which a cauldron has been placed for Achilles to wash his wounded body (one of the most sensuous descriptions of the flesh in the whole *Iliad*), which has been stained with bloodshed. He wears a chest bandage held up with shoulder straps similar to the kind that Agamemnon wears in the Tomb of Orcus, as we saw in chapter 1, but an additional bandage has been wrapped underneath his jaws and tied over his head. While this kind of bandage was sometimes used to treat head and injuries, it more closely corresponds to the chinstraps used during the *prothesis*, or laying out of the body, to prevent the jaws of the deceased from dropping and leaving the mouth open in a disquieting display of muteness.⁹¹ In spite of, or perhaps precisely because of, its grisly depiction of bloodshed and the dressing of wounds, the imagery chimes with the funereal function of the casket, diagramming the relations between corpse



Fig. 4.10 Sarcophagus with Achilles sacrificing the young Trojans on the tomb of Patroclus, late fourth century BCE. Peperino tuffa. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Orvieto. Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

and shade and the obsequies owed to the dead. Rather than a simple depiction of Patroclus's body just as it had looked in life, the ghost of Patroclus on the sarcophagus—itsself an elaborate container for the deceased whose supine position within is evoked by the chinstrap—is a representation of a body that has been treated, anointed, and emphatically *presented* to be seen in this way.

These two treatments of Patroclus's ghost—on the one hand, looking just as he did in life, and on the other, a mutilated figure awaiting burial—offer two contrasting forms of evidence that by the second century CE had already attained the status of forensic evidence in the orator's toolkit of persuasion and proof.⁹² In the so-called *Major Declamations*, a rhetorical handbook of fictitious courtroom speeches widely regarded as an anthology of heterogeneous authorship and uncertain date (with suggestions ranging from the second century up to the fourth), a woman alleges that her husband has hired a sorcerer to cast a spell on the tomb of their son, cruelly imprisoning his ghost who had been appearing to her during the night.⁹³ Ultimately, the dispute comes down to a contest between the persuasive powers of emotion and reason that are emphatically and predictably gendered: on the one hand, between a grieving mother whose ostensibly “hysterical” lack of self-control and wishful thinking induce her hallucinatory visions; on the other, a father who sees things with a cold-blooded rationality that would beggar the belief of any feeling person. For his part, the husband claims that the sorcerer in fact performed no real magic, and that his actions were intended only to generate a kind of placebo effect in his anguished wife's mind. The advocate dutifully defends his client

against this charge, asserting that she was indeed of sound mind when she saw what she saw: “No ghost conjured up in the mistaken beliefs or thoughts of a grieving woman came to her . . . (*Non inani persuasione nec cogitationibus ficta legentis umbra veniebat*).”⁹⁴ The most damning evidence of the father’s guilt is his own desire for proof: “He wanted to put the ghost to the proof (*umbram probare voluit*)!”⁹⁵

Ventriloquizing his client, the advocate sets out to prove a negative, arguing that the *absence* of bodily defilement is paradoxically what testifies to the physicality of his ghost and the reality of its nocturnal visitations:

Suddenly the darkness disappeared and he stood before me, not that pale figure wasted away by his dread disease, nor did he appear as he was on his flaming pyre, but he was healthy and physically quite good looking. Somewhere or other he had left behind that entire appearance of his corpse: his hair was not scorched by the fire, his face was not charred black by the glowing coals of his funeral pyre, there was scarcely a trace of the fire’s unsightly remnants on this fresh ghost (*umbra recentis*) whose ashes were just properly laid to rest.⁹⁶

The sensuousness of the mother’s description—the way she lovingly lingers over the details of her son’s hair, his face, his handsome demeanor—vividly evokes Homer’s description of Achilles seeing the ghost of Patroclus in a dream.⁹⁷ But whereas Patroclus appeared to Achilles precisely because he had *not* yet been burned on the pyre, and had thus been denied entry into the Underworld, the ashes of the mother’s son had been “properly laid to rest (*bene cinere composito*).”⁹⁸

Anticipating the charge that the mother, like Achilles, was merely deluded by a dream, the advocate zeroes in on the funeral pyre that furnishes the basis of her evidentiary claims: “Her son was not created out of her sense of longing nor was he a counterfeit form as one beholds in deceptive dreams. But she learned from experience (*experta*) that a person does not totally perish and she awaits that part which flames do not burn up, which is not obliterated into ashes, and is not adequately confined in urns and tombs.”⁹⁹ Despite the vividness and lifelikeness of this welcome vision of her son, it’s essential to observe just how much hangs in the balance of her mention, so subtle as to be easily overlooked, that “there was *scarcely* (*vix*) a trace” of the pyre’s destructive effects on his body.¹⁰⁰ Grammatically speaking, *vix* (“scarcely,” “barely,” “only just”) functions as a “virtual negative,” a fitting description of a similarly virtual, evanescent presence. And it is precisely this perceived virtuality that continues to give her pause. More than anything, she wants to kiss and embrace the ghost of her son, but doesn’t dare attempt to do so lest he elude her touch, once more alluding to the poetic trope of frustrated desire as when Achilles tries in vain to embrace the ghost of Patroclus, Odysseus the shade of his mother Antikleia, or Aeneas the ghost of his wife Creusa. Over time, however, her

son continued to visit her and “not only stopped coming as a ghost, but in fact sat beside me and embraced me.”¹⁰¹ During the night at least, before he vanishes in the light of day, her son is as real as she is. She assays his form and determines him to be not simply an empty image, but a physical entity with real heft and substance, a phantom in the flesh.

If the materiality of the mother’s recently cremated son sets him apart from the unburned and evanescent qualities of the ghost of Patroclus, the recurrent trope of the funeral pyre and the trace evidence it produces—or in this case *fails* to produce—serves to distinguish him from other classical ghosts. The most salient comparison can be found in Propertius’s elegiac description of the ghost of his girlfriend Cynthia, who had also been properly laid to rest. For Propertius, however, it is precisely the cremated materiality of Cynthia’s ghost *as* a ghost, unmistakable because of the state of her charred flesh, that sends tingles down the lover’s spine in the poem’s opening lines:

So ghosts do exist (*Sunt aliquid Manes*): death is not the end of all, and a pale shade (*umbra*) vanquishes and escapes the pyre. For I dreamt that Cynthia, who had lately been buried to the drone of the funeral trumpet, was leaning over my bed when after my love’s interment sleep hovered over me and I bemoaned the cold empire of my bed. Her hair, her eyes were the same as when she was borne to the grave: her dress was charred at the side, and the fire had gnawed at the familiar beryl on her finger, and Lethe’s water had withered her lips. But it was a living voice and spirit that emerged as her brittle fingers cracked with a snap of her thumb . . .¹⁰²

As Thomas Habinek argues in his study of the poetics of cremation, the standard translation of the first line of the poem, “So ghosts do exist (*Sunt aliquid Manes*),” does not adequately convey the materiality implied by the *aliquid*, which adds an ontological nuance to the poet’s declaration in the sense that ghosts “have substance, or somethingness,” a sentiment that Propertius evocatively links to the billowing smoke of the funeral pyre.¹⁰³

A strikingly similar scene appears in the Vatican Vergil, a deluxe illuminated codex containing the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* produced around the turn of the fifth century CE (and thus roughly contemporary with the Brescia and Milan sarcophagi) where the ghost of Hector appears to Aeneas in a dream (plate 4.7).¹⁰⁴ Aeneas, although asleep, is at once repulsed and perplexed by the sight of Hector, who stands before his eyes (*ante oculos*). Vergil describes the scene as follows:¹⁰⁵

In slumbers, I dreamed that Hector, most sorrowful and shedding floods of tears, stood before my eyes, torn by the ear, as once of old, and black with gory dust, his swollen feet pierced with thongs. Ah me, what aspect was his! How changed he

was from that Hector who returns after donning the spoils of Achilles or hurling on Danaan ships the Phrygian fires—with ragged beard, with hair matted with blood, and bearing those many wounds he received around his native walls.

“Why do I see (*cerno*) these wounds?” asks Aeneas, trying to make sense of the figure before him, whom he barely even recognizes.¹⁰⁶ Hector does not explain, does not *need* to explain, what the reader and viewer already know from Homer: that his horrifically squalid appearance is the fault of Achilles, who had dragged him on the back of his chariot. Although the oneiric mode of Hector’s appearance bears an unmistakable affinity to that of Patroclus, the circumstances of his physical appearance are completely different. Whereas Homer describes the ghost of Patroclus in plainly overdetermined terms as appearing just as he did in life, Aeneas marvels at how completely changed (*quantum mutatus*) Hector looks from his time on the glorious battlefield. In other words, Hector appears exactly as he did at the moment of his death—a moment that Aeneas himself had never witnessed.

In the miniature, which precedes the corresponding text on the facing (verso) side of the leaf, Hector appears as a savagely disfigured, mutilated husk of a hero. Yet the picture hardly stands as an illustration in a one-to-one fashion of Vergil’s description in all of its elaborate, gory detail. No matter how closely one examines the manuscript, it is difficult to make out the pierced and swollen feet, the filthy beard, the hair matted with dried blood, and indeed the “many wounds” (*vulnera . . . plurima*) to which Aeneas so acutely and despondently reacts. All one sees are dark layers superimposed by still darker layers of pigment that depict the muscular topography of Hector’s body, “black with gory dust” (*aterque cruento pulvere*), enveloped within a himation whose folds are highlighted by fast, white strokes.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, the black pigment itself bears a relation to burning and corruption in such a way that it performs its materiality, confounding the distinction between signifier and signified. For the Romans, black pigments were generally classed under the word *atramentum*, a substance comprising various carbon-based materials. The most common form, so-called “India ink” produced from a mixture of gum and soot, proved to be incredibly difficult to apply to parchment, owing to the fatty layers of grease that adhered to the skin (with that of sheepskin, from which the Vatican Vergil was produced, being among the greasiest of all viable animals). It was only later, with the production of better, more resilient white parchment, that this common type of pigment could more easily be applied to the prepared surface.¹⁰⁸

Pliny specifically treats *atramentum* as an artificial pigment, one that was usually prepared from the soot of carbonized vegetable products or else by burning resin or pitch. Scandalously, he notes, “painters have been known to dig up charred remains from graves thus violated to supply it.”¹⁰⁹ In any case, the technique of ob-

taining black pigment through a process of burning organic material nonetheless evokes important associations with ghosts through more typical encounters with the physical remains of the dead. Botched cremations largely due to either meteorological or technical problems (e.g., not achieving a sufficiently high and lasting temperature), a relatively common occurrence in the recorded history of Roman burial customs, could likewise render the body “half-burned” (*semiustum* or *semiambustus*) and thus unrecognizable.¹¹⁰ In more extraordinary circumstances, bodies were sometimes purposefully mutilated in this way. A case in point is the corpse of Caligula described by Suetonius:

His body was conveyed secretly to the gardens of the Lamian family, where it was partly consumed on a hastily erected pyre and buried beneath a light covering of turf; later his sisters on their return from exile dug it up, cremated it, and consigned it to the tomb. Before this was done, it is well known that the caretakers of the gardens were disturbed by ghosts (*umbris*), and that in the house where he was slain not a night passed without some fearful apparition, until at last the house itself was destroyed by fire.¹¹¹

David Noy has persuasively suggested that the half-burning of Caligula’s corpse may well have been done deliberately in order to prevent his political enemies from being able to make a positive identification of his body and target it for further mutilation and humiliation.¹¹² Likewise, it seems possible to see a play of multiple and intersecting layers of metaphorical potency in the use of *atramentum* to depict the body of Hector’s ghost. Comprising the transmuted residue of once-living matter, the black pigment portrays a figure whose disfiguration—like the half-burned corpse from the pyre—makes it virtually unrecognizable. As such, the *atramentum* presents itself as a material trace of something that is neither present nor absent: a pigment whose very materiality is consubstantial with the very subject it represents.

In another key example from the same codex, Aeneas encounters the pathetic, riven figure of his fallen comrade Deïphobus in the gloomy depths of the Underworld (plate 4.8). Vergil describes the grisly scene as follows:

And here he sees Deïphobus, son of Priam, his whole frame mangled and his face cruelly torn—his face and either hand—his ears wrenched from despoiled temples, and his nostrils lopped by a shameful wound. Scarce, indeed, did he know the quivering form that tried to hide its awful punishment . . .¹¹³

Without question, the ghastly appearance of Deïphobus constitutes one of the most gruesome descriptions of body horror in classical literature. Aeneas’s response to the awful sight, figured here by the raising of his hand up to his mouth in a gesture of

shock and awe, indexes the difficulty he faces in regarding and even recognizing (*agnovit*) the pitiful creature standing before him.

The conspicuous display of wounds and battle scars could earn men heaps of praise for personal valor and sacrifice to the Roman state—a literary *topos* from republican times. A well-known example is the famous court case recounted by Quintilian in which Marcus Antonius (the grandfather of Mark Antony) defended his client against charges of rapacity:

Antonius, defending Manius Aquilius, tore open his client's clothes and disclosed the scars (*cicatrices*) he bore in front, earned in his country's service, and thus, instead of relying on his own eloquence, delivered a shock to the eyes of the people of Rome (*oculis populi Romani vim attulit*), who, we are led to believe, were chiefly moved to acquit him by the mere sight (*illo ipso aspectu*).¹¹⁴

Even so, there were limits to the amount of gore and disfiguration that the Romans were willing to consume in the civic sphere.¹¹⁵ Scars on the front of the body were praised, while missing limbs were deemed indecorous or unacceptable for public consumption, hence the qualification of Deïphobus's literal defacement as *inhonesto*, "shameful," or "degraded." While Vergil doesn't use the word *pudor* specifically, he nonetheless employs the language of *pudor* when he describes the ghost's "quivering" (*pavitantem*) form attempting to cover up and "hide its awful punishment" (*dira tegentem supplicia*).¹¹⁶ Rather than inviting us to ask or suppose what is hidden underneath a shroud or covering of cloth, as we saw in the previous chapter, Vergil gets us to probe further still and speculate as to what it is that ghostly guts are made of.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, given the damaged condition of this miniature, the depiction of Deïphobus's ghost is difficult to ascertain (David H. Wright has argued that the seemingly purposeful effacement of his figure was the work of a later Christian reader who saw the ghost as a devil).¹¹⁸ Enough remains of his lower half, however, to make some preliminary observations. The general form of the ghost seems to have been circumscribed by a faint yet perceptible black outline that can be seen around his feet, continuing all the way up to his thighs. The modulating surface of the body itself was painted with a mid- to light-gray wash that is best preserved on his left shin. While the torso has completely disappeared, the head may still be present just above the degraded area, with parts of the identifying label located just above. Despite the poor state of preservation, it is nonetheless clear that the intention was to depict the ghost as a faint, shadowy figure imprisoned in the gloom of Tartarus (the dungeon of the Underworld, located in its deepest and darkest recesses), one who was thereby pushed to the very brink of recognizability like the despoiled body of Hector's ghost.

Whoever caused the damage to the figure of Deïphobus, the damage itself evinces certain analogies between the properties of parchment and forms of embodiment.¹¹⁹ Inks or pigments can easily be removed simply by rubbing the surface of the parchment with a damp cloth. But beyond the water solubility of the ink and pigment, it is important to keep in mind that as a limiting membrane, the medium of parchment *itself* is hydrophobic, often causing the ink applied to its surface to glob up and separate. Parchment thus presents a kind of twofold status whose greatest strengths are merely the flipside of its greatest weaknesses. It is at once both eminently durable and eminently fragile. On the one hand, the literary materiality of parchment was constituted by its capacity for erasure. On the other, it was the medium on which, as Pliny eloquently writes, “the immortality of human beings depends.”¹²⁰ Moreover, the very word for parchment is coextensive with the word for skin (*membrana*), the material from which it is produced, a word that likewise designated the evanescent “films” sloughed off objects in intromissionist theories of vision that explained the appearance of ghosts. Thus, it seems possible to see a playful gloss on the metaphors of *membrana*—of ghostly images that cause vision on the one hand, and of ghostly images depicted on parchment on the other. For in the end, as a limiting membrane, parchment is an organ that has literally been reduced to nothing more than a lifeless shell or husk of an animal’s body, one that has been *bled* so that its vascular system is so transparent as to be practically invisible; *fleshed* so that it bears no visible or physical trace of the connective tissue that made it cohere to the body to which it had once belonged; and *stretched* into a form whose laminar structure runs the risk of peeling off into ever finer sheets of pellicular subtlety.¹²¹

It is useful to consider, if only in a speculative sense, how a contemporary Christian of the likes of Augustine might have experienced the Vatican Vergil (a very real possibility since Vergil—by all accounts *the* poet of the golden age—was esteemed as an infallible authority by Christian commentators every bit as much as their pagan peers).¹²² In this regard, it is instructive to recall Augustine’s *On the Care to Be Given to the Dead*, the only early Christian treatise to address the matter of burial and the rites accorded to the deceased.¹²³ Not coincidentally, ghosts feature prominently in the text, as Augustine finds himself at pains to explain how and why it is that many people report having visions of the unburied dead who show the living where their bodily remains are located and beg them for a proper burial. Calling out Vergil by name (Maro), Augustine cites several lines from Book 6 of the *Aeneid* in order to heap scorn and derision on the fanciful notion—*poetica figmenta*, he says—that the unburied dead were not permitted to cross the infernal river, a notion that he extends to the more general and misguided belief that the dead require burial for their peaceful rest.¹²⁴ To see the ghost of a dead man in a dream,

Augustine asserts, is thus to fall prey to the *poetica falsitas* that subtends Aeneas's visions of the dead in the Underworld.¹²⁵

Along similar lines, but with a different focus on the performing arts, Augustine complains in one of his sermons about the public craze for Underworld imagery: "Yes, nearly all of you know about this; and I'd much rather only a few of you did. But only a few of you know it from books, many of you from the theater, that Aeneas went down to the Underworld, and his father showed him the souls of the great Romans who were going to come into bodies."¹²⁶ Especially revealing here is Augustine's attention to the sociology of knowledge and his general hostility toward the viscosity of the theater from which people obtain their information (or rather misinformation). Despite the fact that Augustine's writings make it clear that he kept a copy of the *Aeneid* close at hand for reference, it is difficult to imagine the hardcore Christian propagandist allowing himself anywhere near an illustrated version of the text such as the Vatican Vergil. For Augustine, Vergil's poetic license constituted a danger and a disease to the susceptible reader, or worse, as in the case of the theater, the viewer.¹²⁷ Its very materiality was pernicious, or at the very least—as suggested in a well-known passage from his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* on the distinction between words and images, and more specifically between words and the iconicity of words—at a significant remove from meaningful understanding:

But if we were looking somewhere at beautiful letters (*litteras pulchras*) it would not be enough for us to praise the skill of the writer for making them equal, symmetrical and ornate, unless we also read what he has expressed for us by means of the letters. Thus, whosoever looks only at the work is pleased by its beauty, for which he admires the artist; but whosoever understands has, as it were, read it. For a picture (*pictura*) is looked at in one way, and letters (*litterae*) in another. When you see a picture, the matter is ended: you have seen, and you praise. When you see the letters, this is not yet the end, because you also have to read (*legere*).¹²⁸

From a modern perspective, Augustine's distinction between seeing pictures and reading words is striking on a number of levels, not the least of which is his anticipation of Lessing's famous thesis about medium specificity, namely that painting is an art of (instantaneously perceived) space and that poetry is an art of (durationally perceived) time.

Returning to the ghost of Deïphobus and the matter of visual discernment, Augustine's analytical distinction between seeing and reading leads us to consider the problem *behind* the problem of all of these wounded ghosts: namely, a problem of temporality. When *exactly* did Hector or Deïphobus (or, for that matter, Patroclus or Christ) receive their wounds? And what happened in the intervening

period? Once again, the question is forensic. Recall, for instance, that the mother in the case of the enchanted tomb refers to her son's phantom as a "fresh ghost" (*umbra recentis*), a formula that once again evokes Vergil. Upon seeing the ghost of Dido in the Underworld, Aeneas notes that the queen's wounds are also *recens*, or "fresh."¹²⁹ This makes sense in terms of the narrative structure of the poem, of course, but it raises another set of questions that are analogous to, but distinct from, the case of the Wounded Amazon discussed above. Imagining for a moment that we were performing an autopsy on Dido's ghost, how might we compare the visual characteristics of her wounds to, say, the older ones of Eriphyle? Does the ghostly body continue to exsanguinate? Or do its wounds scar up after a certain amount of time (a process called "epithelialization" in modern medical terminology)?¹³⁰ If these questions seem ridiculous, Vergil himself appears to invite them, or at least to acknowledge that they have some basis in fact or legitimate standing.

The evidentiary status of scars, including the classic recognition scene at the end of the *Odyssey*, had long held a prominent place in ancient epistemology. As we have seen, the Stoic procedure generally involves assenting to propositions, while the skeptical procedure involves assenting to probabilities. For Cicero, the former was more rigorous. Using the relationship between wounds and scars as an example, he writes: "Since there is a scar, there has been a wound (*Quoniam cicatrix est, fuit vulnus*)."¹³¹ The latter he found less so, making the point with the same example: "If there is much dust on his shoes, he must have been on a journey" (the gist of Cicero's point being that there are any number of reasons that would explain why someone's shoes are caked in dust).¹³² For Sextus, who we will remember is defending the skeptical position by outlining those of his opponents, wounds and scars offered a useful way to illustrate the "recollective" sign, which he defines as follows:

Now, the recollective sign, when it has been observed through plain experience together with the thing signified, leads us, immediately it impinges on us when the other thing is unclear, to a recollection of the thing that has been observed together with it but is not now striking us plainly, as in the case of smoke and fire. For having observed these things connected with one another, immediately we see one of them (that is, the smoke) we renew the rest (that is, the unseen fire). The same account also applies in the case of the scar that comes after a wound . . . for on seeing the scar we renew the wound that preceded it.¹³³

A little later on, Sextus unpacks the temporality of the example that he adduces: "In addition, they say, the sign has to be a present sign of a present thing. Some people are misled into holding that a present thing can be a sign of a past thing, as in the case of 'If this person has a scar, he has had a wound.' For if he has a scar it is a present thing—for it appears—but his having had a wound is a past thing, for

there is no longer a wound.”¹³⁴ Embedded in his explication of what we might call the “tenses” of signs, it is difficult not to read his criticism as being directed toward Cicero’s distinction between the “present tense” of the scar (*cicatrix est*) and the past or “imperfect tense” of the wound (*fuit vulnus*).¹³⁵ Sextus’s point, as he then goes on to explain in his critique of present signs used to predict future things, is that the sign and the signified involve a present thing in relation to a present thing only. Thus, he says: “For in the first case, ‘if this person has a scar, he has had a wound,’ the wound has occurred already and is gone, but this person’s *having had* a wound, which is a proposition, is present, being said about something that has occurred.”¹³⁶ Yet for Sextus the issue remains unclear. For even with all of his technical exposition of the Stoic positions, he is still troubled by the matter of how it is that signs are only perceptible to some people, but intelligible to others. In other words, he is concerned with the question of why only some people, and not others, connect the dots from point A to point B when presented with the same set of data.

At last we are in a position to return to the arguments of Augustine, for whom the postmortem condition of Christ’s wounds, or rather his *scars*, was a paramount concern. In one of his sermons delivered during Easter week in 403 CE, Augustine took up the issue of Christ’s wounds and their evidentiary status:

It would have been possible, after all, for Christ so to heal the wounds in his flesh that no trace of scars remained; it would have been possible for him not to carry the traces of the nails in his hands and feet, not to carry the trace of the wound in his side; but he permitted those scars to remain in his flesh in order to remove from people’s hearts the wound of unbelief, and to take care of their real wounds with the signs and traces of his own wounds.¹³⁷

It is remarkable that Augustine should go out of his way to specify that Christ’s wounds had healed and turned into scars—a crucial detail that may have helped him explain why the sight of the wounds alone was sufficient to satisfy Thomas’s incredulity. At the same time, this detail becomes difficult to square with the question of how Thomas could have put his hand or finger *in* Christ’s side if in fact the evidence in question was a scar, rather than a fleshy, open wound (once again recalling that the Greek verb John uses is *ballein*, rather than *haptomai*, the former having the connotation of penetration, rather than simple touching or grasping as in the latter—a key, perhaps even *the* key, distinction between the apostle and the classical ghost that eludes an embrace). Another curious feature of Augustine’s argument is that, by asserting that Christ could have presented whatsoever appearance he wished the apostles to see, he effectively moves the goalposts for what counts as evidence.

Ultimately, however, Augustine’s overarching point seems to be that Christ did

not tamper with the evidence of his own body in order that we might, in the manner of the Stoics, assent to the proposition that “Since there is a scar, there has been a wound.” In Stoic epistemology, assent results in either good or bad judgments and subsequently a decision or attempt to act. For Augustine, assent becomes a function of the *voluntas*—a concept that would later come to mean a “will” in the sense of a freedom to choose, but which for him has instead a complex sense of a disposition or desire for love or hate—in other words, a desire to turn either toward or away from God.¹³⁸ By famously asserting that belief is nothing other than “thinking with assent,” Augustine ushers in a true paradigm shift whereby belief can be a function of both the intellect and the will.¹³⁹ It is in this context that we might better understand the utterly transformed stakes of belief on the Brescia and Milan sarcophagi and the replica series of Wounded Amazons that undergird the power of their iconographic and theological sophistication. Illusory images were everywhere and appeared even to the most devout members of the faith. What mattered, as the origins of the Doubting Thomas iconography show, was how one discriminated between them. Hidden within these flesh-eating receptacles, the bones of the saints lie enshrined within the confines of their own obstacles of precious stone. As projections of the body that imitate and accommodate the bodies contained therein, the sarcophagi—and the iconography of Doubting Thomas that decorates their outer surfaces—make visible and tangible the stakes of the Incarnation, which in the end amount to no more and no less than the creative act of representation and the embodiment of the world of objects.

Epilogue

FORMS OF SPECTRALITY

Contrary to what we might believe, the experience of ghosts is not tied to a bygone historical period, like the landscape of Scottish manors, etc., but on the contrary, is accentuated, accelerated, by modern technologies like film, television, the telephone. These technologies inhabit, as it were, a phantom structure. . . . When the very *first* perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms.

JACQUES DERRIDA, "The Ghost Dance" (1989)¹

The final proposition of *De Speculis*, a medieval translation of a lost Greek treatise on the theory of mirrors and their practical applications, states its goal succinctly: "To put a mirror in a given place, so that everyone who approaches will see neither himself nor someone else, but only whatever picture (*ymago*) someone has chosen in advance."² For the unknown author of this treatise (conventionally known as Pseudo-Ptolemy), the technical construction of this mirror and its intended effect promises to achieve a twofold goal: on the one hand, to be useful both in theory and in practice; and on the other, to elicit a sense of sheer wonder at its effects even, and perhaps even precisely, when you understand how the trick works.³

The trick in question is devilishly simple: a mirror is inclined toward the observer at a thirty-degree angle so as to reflect a picture tilted back at an angle parallel with the mirror. The angles of vision are crucial to this effect, even if the stakes of its physics were understood differently in antiquity than today. Since the Enlightenment, sight has been understood as the reception of light through the pupil and lens onto the retina, which, through a complex process of sensory intermediation via the rods and cones, passes this information along to the brain for interpretation.⁴ For the author of this treatise, however, sight is caused by visual rays that emanate from the eyes of the observer (hence it is an “extramissionist” theory of vision, in contrast to the “intromissionist” theory described in chapter 1 whereby films of objects impinge on the eye) until they make contact with the object of vision, in this case a mirror that in turn reflects the ultimate object of vision, the picture. Indeed, one of the enduring mysteries in the field of ancient optics was the fact that mirrors reflect the visual ray at equal angles—in other words, that the angle of the incidence of the ray is equal to the incidence of the reflection.⁵ The picture must be hidden behind some sort of screen or barrier that blocks the observer from approaching any further and must in turn be illuminated by windows (*fenestra*) on the sides so that it can be seen in the mirror above: “For a thing situated in darkness (*in tenebris*) cannot be seen, since nothing else, even without a mirror, can be seen when it is situated in darkness.”⁶

While the original Greek text is irretrievably lost, its chance survival in modern editions is itself riddled with errors and questions.⁷ The “original” medieval translation itself does not survive in any direct form, but rather through a sixteenth-century edition that was itself copied in subsequent collations, some of them more or less faithful, others corrupt. Until a relatively recent study and translation of the text in the early 2000s sorted out these various editions and their various issues, the most widely read and influential edition was that of Wilhelm Schmidt at the very turn of the twentieth century.⁸ Beyond the philological matter of the text, Schmidt introduced some new material in the paratext, namely descriptive marginalia and diagrams that illustrated the various propositions. It is assumed that such diagrams were included in the Greek exemplar of the text (they are common in ancient mathematical treatises, for example), but it is also known that a German scholar redrew the diagrams in the medieval translation.⁹ The earliest diagrams we have are rather minimal in their execution, using only simple lines accompanied by letters to indicate various lengths or points of incidence. The diagram for the final proposition shows the construction with a cross-section view in order to demonstrate, for example, the parallel angles of the inclined mirror and the tilted picture. In contrast to this purely geometrical style of presentation, Schmidt took the liberty of adding a figure in the form of a togate observer to the final proposition, still shown as a cross section, with a statue of a woman holding a thyrsus and a basket (fig. E.1). He then

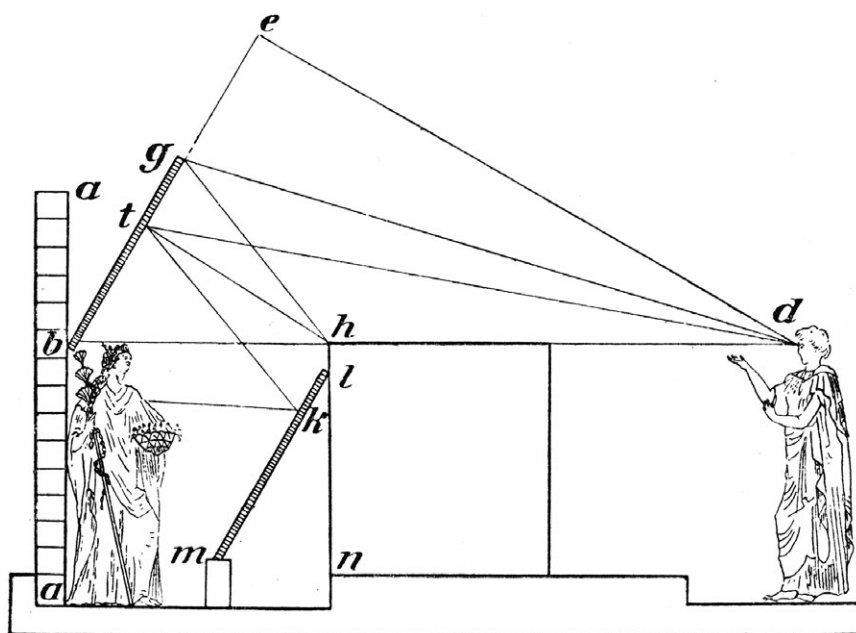


Fig. E.1 Diagram of the ancient “Geisterspiegel” (Proposition 24 of Ps-Ptolemy, *De Speculis*) (after Schmidt 1900).

added a second diagram to show the effect as seen from the standpoint of that observer: now the woman appears to stand behind the obstruction—revealed to be a lit altar ready for sacrifice—in an elaborate temple construction. The ancient author of the treatise makes no mention of any such details and even specifically declines to do so in order not to delimit the scope of its application.

In the margin of his edition, Schmidt called the construction a *Geisterspiegel*, literally a “ghost mirror,” that corresponds to the optical media deployed in the phantasmagoria of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which ghostly phenomena were conjured up in the perceptual dislocation of darkness.¹⁰ The best-known version, “Pepper’s Ghost,” was named after its creator, John Henry Pepper, a British inventor who was a lecturer and director at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London (fig. E.2).¹¹ In his construction, an actor, dressed in pale spectral garb, was located underneath the stage in a space resembling an orchestra pit. Deeper underneath the stage, a technician would project a bright spotlight onto the actor using a high-intensity oxyhydrogen lamp. A black velvet cloth would have been draped behind the actor in order to make him or her stand out and avoid the unintended display of any visual artifacts from the surrounding space. The actor would then have been reclined at a slight angle (not shown in the illustration) in order to facilitate the reflection of his image in a mirror that would then pass onto a pane

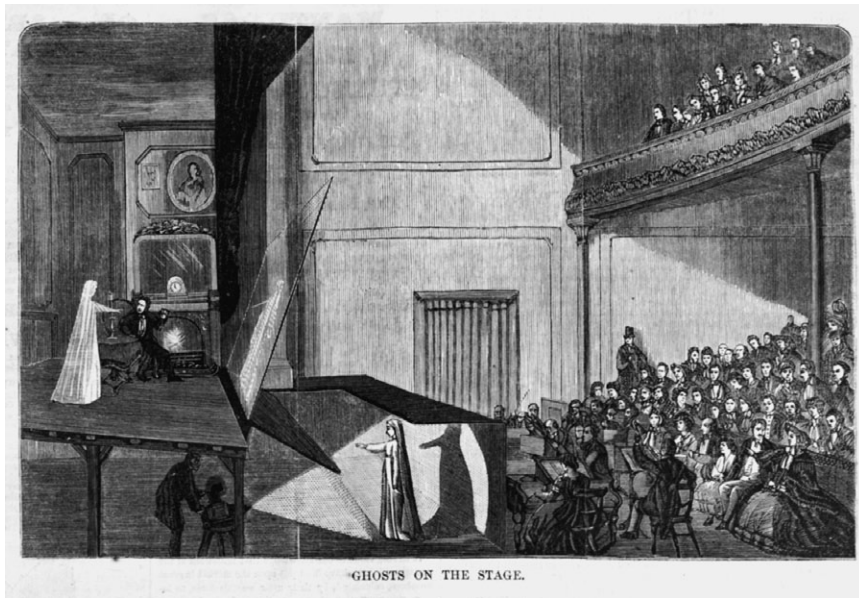


Fig. E.2 Illustration of Pepper's Ghost, *Harper's Weekly* (1864).

of glass whose purity and canted position rendered it completely invisible in the darkness of the theater. For the audience, the resulting effect of this apparatus was that a ghostly, luminous image would appear to intermingle with another actor on the stage, whose unmediated presence in flesh and blood made the distinction that much sharper. Despite the fact that the ancient author never attributes a specifically ghostly character to the setup, Schmidt justified the connection by pointing out its structural similarity to a construction in a thirteenth-century treatise on optics by Witelo, a Polish friar and scientist, who gave detailed instructions on how to arrange a system of mirrors that could produce images of ghosts and spirits.¹²

Schmidt's situation of the ancient construction in a temple, although unmentioned in the text itself, has compelling analogies in ancient literature: in his description of the sanctuary of Despoina at Lycosura in Arcadia, Pausanias reports that "On the right as you go out of the temple there is a mirror fitted into the wall. If anyone looks into this mirror, he will see himself very dimly indeed or not at all, but the actual images of the gods and the throne can be seen quite clearly (*enargōs*)."¹³ The word that Pausanias uses to describe an observer's dim reflection in the mirror, *amudros*, is directly related to the lexical field of darkness and obscurity, and by extension to nocturnal shades and phantoms. Crucially, the mirror is evidently not concealed from the beholder's view: its efficacy as a technology of epiphany does not require its phantasmagorical occultation in the manner of Pep-

per's Ghost.¹⁴ At the same time, Schmidt's *Geisterspiegel* keyed into a much broader nineteenth-century discourse about ancient priestly castes who consolidated their power through a monopoly of knowledge about optical media and their potential for fostering and manipulating belief and superstition. In his *Pompeiana* of 1832, the English classical archaeologist William Gell cited a passage from Eusebius to support the claim that there were "machines by which phantasmagoria and oracular prestiges were played off" in the Temple of Fortune.¹⁵ And in his *Letters on Natural Magic* published that same year, Sir David Brewster claimed that "There is reason to believe that [the ancients] employed [lenses and mirrors] to effect the apparitions of their gods; and in some of the descriptions of the optical displays which hallowed their ancient temples, we recognize all the transformations of modern phantasmagoria."¹⁶

What distinguished the construction in *De Speculis* from its modern lookalike? To be sure, there were major technical differences—luminous projection versus natural light, large planes of transparent glass versus polished mirrors, and the like. In the genealogy of cinema, Pepper's Ghost has long served as an important precursor for the historical emergence of techniques of control that manage and obfuscate the material supports of the imagery it produces and the conditions of their visibility.¹⁷ For scholars working at the intersections of modern art and cinema, this sort of setup and the variety of discourses and practices that underlie it (architectural, institutional, scientific, philosophical, and so on) constitute a Foucauldian "dispositif"—one that has been usefully characterized in different contexts, but touching on the same set of affairs, as "transparent" and "phantasmagorical," respectively.¹⁸ The construction in *De Speculis* was likewise a dispositif, one that might be called "catoptric." Crucially, however, there is more at stake here than adding yet another term to the lexicon of illusory effects. Whereas the historical account of the cinematic apparatus is predicated on the notion of a disembodied, passive spectator immersed in darkness, the physics of reflection in antiquity were regarded as thoroughly and ineluctably *embodied* processes. Indeed, it is the question of visibility that reveals the greatest difference between the two constructions and the visual cultures in which they took shape (bearing in mind the ancient author's belabored insistence that "a thing situated in darkness cannot be seen, since nothing else, even without a mirror, can be seen when it is situated in darkness").¹⁹ Gérard Simon has cogently laid out the stakes of such a technical setup in a visual culture that remains tantalizingly familiar, yet alien from our own: "In a theory of the visual ray, in the absence of a gazer, the mirror reflects nothing that bears a relation to visibility."²⁰ Like the sound of the proverbial tree falling in a forest, the ancients held that there simply *is* no reflection to see in the mirror without an embodied observer there to see it.

Tom Gunning has neatly summed up this uncanny recognition of the present

in the past, and vice versa: “As ancient accounts of seeing ghosts were anachronistically redefined in terms of modern optical devices, advances in technology were often reinterpreted in an untimely fashion in terms of older, scientifically discredited, systems.”²¹ One of the most famous of these untimely “reinterpretations” was Karl Marx’s use of the phantasmagoria as a metaphor for the illusory nature of the commodity-form, and it is no coincidence that his doctoral dissertation, “On the Difference between Democritean and Epicurean Philosophies of Nature,” explicitly touches on the sense-perception of *eidōla* in the intromissionist theory of vision that explained the appearance of ghosts.²² Thanks to the ostensibly “spectral” quality of capitalist forms of life beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the figure of the ghost has attracted a significant body of critical and theoretical reflection.²³ One of the more provocative claims of this strand of scholarship and its focus on questions of mediality and the materiality of spirit is that the ostensibly irrational fear of ghosts and hauntings, far from being relegated to some primitive past, is rather amplified by modern technologies and forms of life that mask the relations of a social world through capitalist techniques of separation.²⁴

Despite the fact that modern forms of spectrality routinely and strategically deploy ancient concepts and terms for theorizing a “phantom structure” of modern technicity—a classic instance in the history of photography, relayed by Félix Nadar’s memoir, is the intromissionist theory of vision underlying Honoré de Balzac’s purported fear of the daguerreotype’s ability to capture, and thereby deplete, the spectral layers of his corpulent body—it remains striking how consistently the category of “ancient superstition” or credulity has served as the unquestioned, monolithic foil for debates about techniques of disenchantment and demystification in modernity.²⁵ In a pioneering article, Terry Castle argued that “The phantasmagoria was invented, it turns out, at a crucial epoch in the history of Western ghost belief—at precisely that moment when traditional credulity had begun to give way, more or less definitively, to the arguments of scientific rationalism.”²⁶ At the same time, as she asserts in a chastened qualification, the historical emergence of the phantasmagoria betrayed a “rationalist paradox” in which tactics of demystification—tactics that were often employed by the very purveyors of the phantasmagoria such as John Henry Pepper—transformed knowledge *itself* into a kind of thaumaturgy that laid the groundwork for the revenge of the repressed (plate E.1).²⁷

Throughout this book, I have tried to sketch some of the ways in which a superficially similar, but historically and epistemologically distinct, situation took shape in the Second Sophistic. It is no coincidence, I think, that the more the very existence of ghosts was debated in ancient discourses, the more they appear in depictions in tomb painting, floor mosaics, and mythological sarcophagi. As I have argued, the matter is not so simple as identifying depictions of ghostly phenomena simply as the mirror of beliefs. Rather, it has to do with the imagistic relays that connect

the visual operations of seeing and the visual operations of depiction—relays that become visible in the culture of *paideia* in the Second Sophistic and the world of myth that served as its “fantasmatic support.”²⁸ By the early third century, the very zenith of the Second Sophistic, we already begin to see what T. J. Clark, in looking at the evidence of Roman mythological sarcophagi, has evocatively described as the “pagan tapestry unraveling.”²⁹ Indeed, specialists of Roman sarcophagi have traditionally identified this unraveling in a process of “demythologization” (*Entmythologisierung*) in which mythological protagonists rapidly give way to an increasingly standardized repertoire of so-called *vita humana* imagery—hunters, shepherds, philosophers, and so on—that in turn opens onto the pageant of early Christian art.³⁰ The object with which I began this study, an early third-century sarcophagus depicting husband and wife as elite intellectuals flanking either side of a shrouded ghost emerging from a half-open door to the Underworld, perfectly diagrams the stakes of this pivotal moment: one in which the edifice of learning frames the very figure of credulity that remains forever liminal, threatening to burst forth from its rationalizing containment.³¹

I therefore envision this book as offering a hitherto neglected, but necessary, prehistory to the Christianizing belief in ghosts in late antiquity and the Middle Ages on the one hand, and on the other the rationalizing attempts in modernity to dispel or eradicate such a belief—if only to displace it elsewhere (e.g., the enchantments of technology, psychoanalysis, physiological theories of hallucination, etc.).³² Ghosts, it seems safe to say, have always been regarded as marginal figures hovering at the very fringes of belief and the experience that informs that belief. What changes are the material supports of belief that filter what counts as experience—supports whose forms at once constitute and coincide historically with what is possible to believe.³³ Perhaps for that very reason, the apparent marginality of ghosts is the key to understanding their paradoxical and enduring hypersalience.³⁴

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin, 1972–)
<i>ASR</i>	<i>Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs</i> (Berlin, 1890–)
<i>ASR</i> I, 3	Reinsberg, C. <i>Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben. Vita Romana-Sarkophage</i> (Berlin, 2006)
<i>ASR</i> I, 4	Amedick, R. <i>Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben. Vita privata</i> (Berlin, 1991)
<i>ASR</i> II	Robert, C. <i>Mythologische Cyklen</i> (Berlin, 1890)
<i>ASR</i> III, 1	Robert, C. <i>Einzelmythen—Actaeon bis Hercules</i> (Berlin, 1897)
<i>ASR</i> III, 3	Robert, C. <i>Einzelmythen—Niobiden bis Triptolemos</i> (Berlin, 1919)
<i>ASR</i> XII, 1	Grassinger, D. <i>Die mythologischen Sarkophage. Achill, Adonis, Aeneas, Aktaion, Alkestis, Amazonen</i> (Berlin, 1999)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1853–)
<i>ES</i>	Gerhard, E., ed. <i>Etruskische Spiegel</i> (Berlin, 1843–1897)
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> (Zurich and Munich, 1981–1999)

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 3.
2. On these terminological problems and the broader “grammar” they evince, see chapter 1, with further bibliography.
3. Following Whitney Davis, I make a distinction between “images” and “pictures.” See chapter 1.
4. See especially the collections of essays in Richter and Johnson 2017; Whitmarsh 2013; Borg 2004; Goldhill 2001 and, for a monographic treatment focusing on the period between the Second Sophistic and late antiquity, Elsner 1998.
5. See especially Zeitlin 2001 and Kim 2010, 175–215.
6. Derrida 1994, 3. Cf. Paul Veyne’s point about the incompatibility of myth and narrative time: “Zeus is only a figure from a tale, without true civic standing, and it would be absurd to wonder if he seduced Danaë before or after he ravished Leda.” Veyne 1988, 88.
7. On this sarcophagus, see Ewald 1999, 199. Cf. Borg 2004, 157–178.
8. See especially Platt 2012, 218ff; and Haarløv 1977.
9. A key example of this methodological shift can be seen in the study of Roman mythological sarcophagi, whose imagery was traditionally interpreted for abstruse eschato-

logical messages, but, following a landmark essay by Arthur Darby Nock, has recently turned to strategies of analogy, allusion, and the communicative power for the bereaved. See especially Nock 1946, 140–170; Koortbojian 1995; Zanker and Ewald 2012. For the dominant form of mystical interpretation before Nock's intervention, see Cumont 1922 and 1942. Despite the fact that Cumont's eschatological focus has become somewhat unfashionable today, his influence remains strong in the work of Robert Turcan, for example: see Turcan 1978 and 1999. More recently, however, scholars have begun to question whether the "secularizing" mode of interpretation has gone too far: see especially Elsner 2012; Platt 2011; and Bielfeldt forthcoming. See my discussion of these issues in chapter 3. For a general introduction to Roman perspectives on the afterlife, see Brilliant 1999.

10. On visibility, see especially Foster 1988; Crary 1990; and Nelson 2000. My understanding of "pictoriality" is indebted to Bryson 1983 and especially to Davis 2011, 157ff; and Davis 2017, who draws from a genealogy of thought on philosophical problems of depiction chiefly through Wittgenstein 1993 and Wollheim 1980, as well as Goodman 1976; Baxandall 1985; and Podro 1998. On related issues in the case of Greek sculpture, see also Neer 2010a, 11ff. For more on these issues, see my discussion in chapter 1.
11. Plutarch, *Dion* 2.
12. Veyne 1988, 41–58.
13. On the "material supports" of belief, see especially Derrida and Stiegler 2002, 149ff; and Žižek 2001, 51–53.
14. Useful here is Merleau-Ponty's notion of "perceptual faith," which he qualified in the notes of his unfinished manuscript: "Notion of faith to be specified. It is not faith in the sense of decision, but in the sense of what is before any position . . ." Merleau-Ponty 1968, 311.
15. Kuhn 1970. For an example of such an approach that touches on the present topic, see Pettenò 2004, which includes an appendix filled with bar graphs, pie charts, and tables intended to visually demonstrate the relative occurrence of various iconographic motifs. One of the major problems here is that the quasi-objectivity of techniques of data visualization obscures the extremely small "data set" in question. Especially useful here is Ruth Bielfeldt's review in Bielfeldt 2007. For a similar skepticism about the model of the social sciences in classical art and archaeology, see especially Neer 2010a, 2; and in the context of archaeological methodology, Fentress 2000, 44–52.
16. On Greek and Roman ghost stories, see in general Felton 1999; Johnston 1999; Stramaglia 1999; Ogden 2001; and Marlier 2006. On typologies and classifications of ghosts, see especially Felton 1999, 22–37.
17. See especially the collection of essays in Lepinski and McFadden 2015.
18. On the vast topic of belief, the following general philosophical, psychological, and anthropological studies have been particularly useful (for more on belief in Greek and Roman antiquity, see n23 below): Durkheim 1995; Galbraith 2015; Peirce 1955, 5–22; Price 1969; Needham 1972; and Žižek 2001.
19. Vogt 2012.
20. Schmitt 1998, 7.

21. Schmitt 1998, 7.
22. On changes in religious belief during the Reformation, see especially Koslofsky 2000 and Marshall 2002.
23. See especially Ando 2008; Linder and Sheid 1993; Feeney 1998; and Price 1984.
24. On the Roman *manes* in the epigraphic tradition, see especially Lattimore 1962; Carroll 2006; and King 2009. On questions of gender and religious practice pertaining to the *manes*, see Mueller 2011.
25. Augustine, *De spiritu et littera* 30.54, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2.5. See chapter 4.
26. For a recent approach of this kind to the historical understanding of ghosts in modernity, see Andriopoulos 2013.
27. See Davidson 2001. See also Hacking 2002, especially 178–199 and, in general, Chandler, Davidson, and Harootunian 1994.
28. Daston 1994, 283. In the same volume, see also Castle 1994 and Meltzer 1994.
29. Lehoux 2012, 79.
30. Dodds 1973, 158–159. Cf. Dodds 1951.
31. For an example of such an approach to the matter of dreams, see Harris 2009.
32. Poovey 1998.
33. Lehoux 2012, 149–150.
34. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 7.27.1. On this letter, see especially Baraz 2012, 105–132; Shannon 2013.
35. Spinoza 1995, Letter 51, 260. On these letters and their ghostly topic in relation to Spinoza's philosophy, see Billecoq 1987 and Rabaté 1996, 216–233.
36. Spinoza 1995, Letter 53, 264.
37. Spinoza 1995, Letter 52, 262.
38. Plato, *Theaetetus* 196e.
39. For a recent overview and critique of the division between *otium* and *negotium* in Roman ideology, particularly understood in relation to the visual arts, see especially Hallett 2015, 23ff.
40. Leach 2003.
41. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.6.11.
42. Tacitus, *Annals* 21.
43. Pliny, *Epistulae* 7.27.12.
44. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.6.
45. Keegan 2013, 73.
46. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 12.1.11–13.
47. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 5.11.36.
48. On this analogical problem in Roman jurisprudential thought, see Ando 2015b, 36.
49. Spinoza 1995, Letter 52, 262.
50. Spinoza 1995, Letter 54, 267.
51. Lessing 1889, 260–261.
52. On the issue of “probabilistic” standards of proof in skeptical thought, see chapter 3 and, more generally, Moss 2018.
53. Pliny, *Epistulae* 7.27.2, 7.27.16.

54. Pliny, *Epistulae* 7.27.15.
55. Juvenal, *Satires* 2.149–152.
56. Lucian, *The Lover of Lies* 28.
57. Pliny, *Natural History* 5.12.
58. On experiment and epistemological blind spots in ancient science, philosophy, and rhetoric, see Lehoux 2012, 133–154.
59. Lloyd 1979, 81.
60. Pliny, *Epistulae* 7.27.16.
61. Baraz 2012, 123.
62. Traninger 2014, 34.
63. Bryson 1994, 68.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Wittgenstein 2007, 48e.
2. Siegel 1985, 248.
3. See especially Powers 2011, 11–14, 17–19; and Platt 2018a, 264–267.
4. Maillet 2004.
5. Pliny, *Natural History* 36.196–197.
6. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.434, 3.504–505. Cf. Brenkman 1976, 325.
7. Wittgenstein 1993, 131–133.
8. Crucially, Wittgenstein distinguished this historical approach from a rigidly teleological or developmental sort: “The historical explanation, the explanation as an hypothesis of development, is only one way of assembling the data—of their synopsis. It is just as possible to see the data in their relation to one another and to embrace them in a general picture without putting it in the form an hypothesis about temporal development.” Wittgenstein 1993, 131.
9. I draw here from Richard Neer’s work that proposes a historical “grammar of use” pertaining to Greek sculpture that makes similar use of this passage from Wittgenstein: Neer 2010a, 18ff. Cf. Davis 2011, 277–321.
10. On this and competing theories of vision in antiquity, see especially Lindberg 1976.
11. Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 215 (XV.16), 1–3. Cf. Armstrong 2011, 112–113.
12. On the word *spectrum* and its links to questions of theory and technicity, see Derrida and Stiegler 2002, *passim*.
13. Aristotle, *De Somniis* 462a; Goethe 1970.
14. Tellingly, Goethe says on the very first page of his thesis that these “appearances have been known from ancient date; but, as they were too evanescent to be arrested, they were banished to the reign of phantoms, and under this idea have been very variously described.” Goethe 1970, 1. Not coincidentally, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who consulted Goethe’s *Farbenlehre* while writing his own philosophy of color, describes the following scenario: “If a ghost appeared to me during the night, it could glow with a weak whitish light, but if it looked grey, then the light would have to appear as though it came from somewhere else.” Wittgenstein 2007, 47e.

15. Puelma 1985. Cf. Sedley 1998, 39.
16. Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 216 (XV.19), 1–2.
17. Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.139.
18. Lévi-Strauss 2002, 63.
19. Davis 2017, passim and especially 1–23 on the distinction between “images” and “pictures.” On the relations between depiction and aspect-seeing or “aspectivity,” see especially Wollheim 1980, 205–226. Davis untangles some of the slippery ways in which the word “image” is deployed and conflated with “pictures” across a variety of disciplines such as art history and anthropology, examples of which in Anglophone literature include Mitchell 1986 and 1994; Elkins 1999. In German, see especially Boehm 1994; Belting 2011; Bredekamp 2018. See also the classic philological study of “figura” in Auerbach 1984, as well as the recent study of Porter 2017.
20. Here I follow Mitchell 1986, 5: “A less prudent, but I hope more imaginative and productive, way of dealing with this problem is to allow the recursive problem full play. This involves attention to the way in which images (and ideas) double themselves: the way we depict the act of picturing, imagine the activity of imagination, figure the practice of figuration.”
21. For a persuasive critique of the widespread assumption, via the discourse on idolatry, that the purpose of Roman religious art was to give visible form to ostensibly invisible gods, see especially Ando 2010. On the issue of the “unrepresentable,” see especially Alloa 2015, 367–389.
22. See especially Didi-Huberman 2005 and Marin 2001, 373–390. On strategies of hendiadys in Latin suggested in such phrases as *statuae et imagines*, see Lahusen 1982 and Stewart 2003, 23.
23. Panofsky 1995, 26–54.
24. Davis 2011, 187–229.
25. Kant 2002. Cf. Andriopoulos 2013, 23–48. On the political economy of *Grenzen* in Lessing’s thought, see Mitchell 1986, 95–115.
26. Kant 2002, 5.
27. Kant 2002, 5–6.
28. Kant 2002, 6.
29. Kant 2002, 10.
30. Vernant explored this issue in a series of articles, but his landmark article cited above outlines the general argument, which subsequent articles went on to elaborate, especially as regards the contribution of Platonism.
31. Halliwell 2002, 13–14.
32. The philological basis of Vernant’s early thinking on the *kolossos* was Benveniste 1931, 118–135.
33. See especially Saïd 1987, 309–330; Vollkommer 1997; and Platt 2014b.
34. Vernant 1991, 190.
35. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 9.38.5. See also Vernant 2006, 330–331.
36. Johnston 1999, 82ff.
37. The bibliography on white-ground lekythoi is substantial; on the iconography of *eidōla*

- in particular, see especially Siebert 1981, 63–73; Peifer 1989; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995; Bardel 2000, 140–160; Oakley 2004; Arrington 2014, 239–274; and, most recently, Jones 2015, 814–837.
38. Jones 2015, 834.
 39. Emily Vermeule proposed a rather strict division between the two, calling the larger figures *eidōla* and the winged figures *psuchai*. For a different view, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 58n136.
 40. For the white-ground lekythos attributed to the Achilles Painter at the Metropolitan Museum in New York: 1989.281.72; for the lekythos attributed to the Sabouroff Painter in Athens: Athens NM 1926, ARV2 846.193. For Bardel, these diminutive figures can be likened to the figures of the *hoi polloi* or the *muria nekrōn* that Homer uses to describe the dead as a collective mass of the unrecognized dead; as such, they “provide the background . . . against which the recognizable individual ghosts (*eidōla*) appear and serve to emphasize the distinction between the two categories of the dead in both literary and pictorial representations.” Bardel 2000, 149. Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 11.632.
 41. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 58n36.
 42. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 6. Cf. Catoni 2005.
 43. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 6n25. Cf. Gombrich 1960. On the ramifications of this neo-Kantian genealogy of art history through Erwin Panofsky and Gombrich, see especially Didi-Huberman 2005.
 44. Neer 2010b, 181–195. Neer’s argument is essentially a translation of Ian Hacking’s concept of “dynamic nominalism” into an ancient context. For Hacking, “We can well understand the word ‘pencil’ nicely sorts out some objects. We manufacture pencils; that is why they exist. Nominalism about human artifacts is no problem. It is nominalism about grass, trees, and stars that is the problem. How can our words fit the earth and heavens if there are not, prior to us, grass, trees, and stars? A strict and universal nominalism is a preposterous mystery. What, however, about categories applying to people?” Hacking 2002, 48.
 45. Neer 2010b, 191.
 46. Mitchell 1994, 35.
 47. Mitchell 1994, 38.
 48. White-ground lekythos attributed to the Thanatos Painter: MFA 01.8080.
 49. Neer has shown how sculptors by the end of the fifth century had begun to produce monumental stone grave markers again that took up the class of lekythoi as their theme, thus translating the three-dimensional objects and their two-dimensional depictions into the medium of relief sculpture: Neer 2010a, 211–212.
 50. On the topic of new poses in pedimental sculpture during the Classical period, see Neer 2010a, 96ff.
 51. Mitchell 1994, 76–77.
 52. *CV4*, Japan 2 (Osaka; Oka Collection, 1374.1). Cf. Oakley 2004, 206.
 53. Podro 1998, 16 and 27.
 54. Podro 1998, 28.
 55. On the Tomb of Orcus (II), see most recently the interpretations of de Grummond

- 2006, 211ff; and Jannot 2005, 66–67; as well as Steingraber 1984, 334–337; and Steingraber 2006, for further bibliography.
56. Neer 2010a, 18.
 57. On the etymology of the *hinthial*, see especially Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 169ff.
 58. On the relations between word and image in Magritte's paintings, see especially Foucault 1982; Mitchell 1994, 64–76; and, in relation to the depictive challenge of a different historical context that offers some intriguing parallels with the present study, Peers 2001, 123–125.
 59. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 82ff. The inscription of the ghost is in itself significant, as it seems to reveal a specifically Italic phenomenon. The only other instance of a ghost being labeled as such occurs on a contemporary Apulian red-figure volute-krater by the Underworld Painter that specifically identifies the *eidōlon* of Aeetes (*EIDŌLON AĒTOU*). Cf. Siebert 1981, 67; and Bardel 2000, 141ff. On labels in Etruscan art, see especially Cousin 2016, 171–198.
 60. Museum Gregoriano Etrusco; after *ES* vol. 2, 240.
 61. Chamay 1977–1978, 247–249; Bonfante and de Grummond 1989, 99–116.
 62. Homer, *Odyssey* 24, 1–10.
 63. Davis 2011, 187–192.
 64. Homer, *Iliad* 5.696, 15.668, 20.321, 341; *Odyssey* 20.357. Cf. the black “halo” around the figure in metope 5 in the Tomb of the Swing from Cyrene: Rouveret 2004, 103, 123–124.
 65. Lessing 1962, 70. On the semiotics of the cloud, see Damisch 2002.
 66. Seneca, *Natural Questions* 1.5.11.
 67. Otto Brendel's description of the vaporous black cloud behind Velcha's head is particularly insightful on this point: “The handling of the chiaroscuro, unwonted in ancient art, is remarkable because it reverses the customary relation between light ground and solid objects. It thereby anticipates in principle the kindred demonstrations of modern painting, for example Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci” (Brendel 1978, 338).
 68. Riggs 2006, 168ff.
 69. Kákosy 1971. On the *Tale of Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire*, see Simpson 2003, 470–489. On the punishments of Hades, see especially Pettèno 2004 and Painesi 2014. On the eschatological intermingling of Egyptian and Greco-Roman traditions, see most recently Smith 2017, 356ff.
 70. Davis 2011, 207ff.
 71. Faulkner 1972; Stoichita 1997b, 11–41.
 72. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.15.
 73. In his study of the Pushkin shroud, László Kákosy included a line drawing in order to bring out the mere visibility of these figures that practically dissolve in the low-quality photographic reproduction: Kákosy 1971, 91, fig. 1a.
 74. Apuleius, *Apology*, trans. Vincent Hunink. In Harrison et al. 2001, [63–64], 85–86. Cf. Too 1996, 133–152.
 75. On a related set of concerns about ghosts and magic in a courtroom setting, see the last section of chapter 4.
 76. Too 1996.

77. Davis 2017, 11ff. Cf. Gordon 1979 and Neer 2017.
78. Lehoux 2012, 90.
79. *OLD* s.v. *sceletus*: Apuleius, *Apologia* 61; 63. The anatomical term for a skeleton in Greek was *skeletos*; while the word *sceletus* does exist in Latin, it is extremely uncommon and rather confusingly occurs in the same context as *larva*, which in that case clearly refers to the ghostly definition of the term.
80. Seneca, *Epistles* 24.18.
81. Frel 1980; Dunbabin 1986.
82. Bodel 1994, 237.
83. Dunbabin 1986, 251ff, with further bibliography.
84. Davis 2017, 51ff.
85. The principal study on this topic is Winkler 1980, 160ff. Cf. Snowden 1983, 82–84.
86. See especially Snowden 1983 and Tanner 2010, 1–39.
87. Suetonius, *Caligula* 57.4.
88. *Anthologia Latina* 1.183 (translation after Snowden 1983, 83).
89. On the “aestheticizing” aspects of visual representations of race, see especially Dyer 1997.
90. In the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* 22 (a work of the second century CE), a sharp distinction is drawn between Ethiopians and Egyptians, the former of whom, on account of their darker skin, are presented as especially frightening: in a dream, Marcellus sees a demon who resembled “a woman exceeding foul, in sight like an Ethiopian, not an Egyptian, but altogether black and filthy, clothed in rags, and with an iron collar about her neck and chains about her hands and feet, dancing.” Cf. Winkler 1980, 161.
91. Lehoux 2014, 224–226.
92. The literature is substantial, but see especially Snowden 1970; Snowden 1983; Clarke 1996; Isaac 2004; Tanner 2010; and Gruen 2011.
93. Snowden 1983, 83.
94. Clarke 1996, 188. For a strong and persuasive critique of this tendency, see Tanner 2010.
95. Winkler, for example, remarks that “In the stories where a black person is taken for a demon or ghost, it is not just the skin colour that is frightening but the ominous circumstances,” and furthermore that “It is not simply black skin colour that is frightening in ominous circumstances but other visible features—unkempt hair, squalor, a ferocious look” (Winkler 1980, 162). I point to this quote not out of mere captiousness, but rather to put Winkler’s claim into its own historiographical context, namely the way in which it explicitly builds on Snowden’s efforts to dislodge the perception of skin color as the primary basis of prejudice in Greco-Roman society. In my view, the list of descriptive terms that serve to construct the literary context of the pirates in the novel hardly squares with the rather optimistic or relativizing aspects of Snowden’s revisionist scholarship. See Tanner 2010 for an excellent treatment on the ongoing tendency of classical scholarship to aestheticize racial differences.
96. Fanon 2008. For a striking account of Fanon’s work on blackness and subjectivity in a modern and contemporary context, see English 2010, 32ff.
97. Althusser 2001; Mitchell 1994, 25ff. Despite the enormous historical and cultural gulf

- that separates classical antiquity from Western modernity, and more specifically the repercussions of American slavery, it nevertheless seems useful to compare the scenarios described above with the sentiment expressed in the preface to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952): "No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." Ellison 1995, 3.
98. Davis 2017, 51ff.
 99. For an analogous treatment of issues of race, depiction, and the field of vision in the modern contexts of film and photography, see especially Mercer 1993 and Dyer 1997.
 100. Lehoux 2012, 153.
 101. Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates*, trans. Stephen Harrison, in Harrison et al. 2001, [152–153], 207.
 102. Ogden 2001, 149.
 103. Apuleius, *Apology*, in Harrison et al., 2001, [38], 63.
 104. Lessing 1889, 213. Cf. Goodman 1955.
 105. Santa Chiara sarcophagus: *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919, 496n422); Andreae 1963, 37ff; Zanker and Ewald 2012, 101–102. Vatican, Galleria dei Candelabri, inv. no. 2465: Winckelmann 1767, 164–165; *ASR* III 3 (Robert 1919, 498–500, n. 423); Blome 1978, 445–449; Zanker and Ewald 2012, 392–396; Newby 2011, 197ff; Platt 2012, 221–223; Bielfeldt forthcoming.
 106. This foundational aspect of the story originates in the *Iliad* (2.698–702), although Homer does not mention the wife of Protesilaus by name.
 107. In his scholia, Eustathius confirms that Protesilaus was allowed to visit Laodamia, but it is unclear whether this was at his or Laodamia's request: see Dindorf 1975, 2.701, 325.26. Lucian, in his *Dialogues of the Dead*, specifies that it was Protesilaus who implored Pluto for this favor.
 108. Fulkerson, 63n8, has compiled a useful list: Sword: Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.30, Tzetzes. *A ntehomeric* 233–34 and *Chiliades* 2.52.777–79. Hanging: Pausanias 4.2.7. Immolation: Hyginus, *Fabulae* 104. Servius, *ad Aeneid* 6.447: Fulkerson points out his cryptically phrased "She died in his [statue's?] embrace."
 109. For the reconstruction of the play (including the visual evidence of the sarcophagus), see Mayer 1885, 101–43; for the fragments, see Nauck 1976, especially fragment no. 656, which alludes to the method of suicide, probably by sword; see the new Loeb edition of Collard and Cropp.
 110. Statius, *Silvae* 3.5.49. Cf. Newby 2014, 256–287.
 111. Philostratus, *Imagines* 2.9.5.
 112. As Laurel Fulkerson has made clear, Ovid seems to be drawing upon the same version of the myth described by his contemporary Hyginus: the magical relationship forged between the wax image of Protesilaus and its referent, as well as Laodamia's suicide by immolation. Fulkerson 2002, 62ff.
 113. Ovid, *Heroides* 13.151–158.
 114. Apollodorus (Pseudo-Apollodorus), *Epitome* III.30. Cf. Platt 2014b.

115. Pollitt 1986, 269–270.
116. On these issues of planarity and what he calls the “direct axis of observation (ADO),” see Davis 2017.
117. Didi-Huberman 2005, 229–271.
118. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 361–364.
119. Bettini 1999.
120. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4.1094–1101.
121. Ovid, *Heroides* 13.107–112.
122. Ovid, *Remedia Amoris* 724–27.
123. Halm-Tisserant 1988, 223–244. Cf. Versnel 1987, 47ff; and Platt 2011.
124. Dodds 1951, 105ff.
125. Felton 1999, 19; Propertius also uses the similar *incumbere*: *Elegies* 4.7.
126. Harris 2009, 23ff.
127. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.802, 838; *Iliad* 2.20, 23.68: cf. Dodds 1951, 104; Dracontius, *Orestis tragoedia* 515–522: cf. Bouquet 2008, 175.
128. Paris, Louvre, inv. K 710. Cf. Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978 and 1982, 97n229; Shapiro 1994, 136; Bardel 2000, 156–157; Lissarrague 2006, 51–70.
129. Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 94, trans. R. Fagles 1977. The externality of Clytemnestra’s ghost is underscored by *eudoit’* used in this scene, which follows the Homeric tradition of ghosts as waking individuals to speaking ones (*eudoit’an. õē. kai katheudousõn ti dei*): cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.23, 23.69; cf. Dodds 1951, 105.
130. Brown 1983, 30–31.
131. Davis 2017, 60, 171.
132. On the correlation between the image and the play, see especially Shapiro 1994, 146–147.
133. In very general terms, Freud explained, the dream-work indicates a form of thought: the process, which he likened to the decipherment of a rebus, through which latent dream-thoughts are transformed into manifest dream-content. To the extent that the dream-work functioned as a rebus or picture-puzzle to be parsed out—and not at all as a pictorial composition to be grasped all at once—its interpretation would entail an associative chain of signs that by their very nature seem to resist any logical configuration. The dream-work, in other words, is like a picture-language rather than a picture itself, and yet like the picture it is composed of a material that resists the representation of logical relations. Freud 1999, 211ff.
134. Marin 2001, 60. On the recursive nature of dreams and their figurative potential as forms of imaginative activity, see especially the sensitive treatment in Miller 1994, 14–38. For an account of the relationship between dreams and religious effigies in the Second Sophistic, see especially Platt 2011.
135. On the semiotic charge of gesture and its narrative possibility, see especially Brilliant 1963.
136. Crary 1999, 113.
137. Ovid, *Heroides* 13.17–24. On the ocular qualities of Roman elegy and its insinuation into the sarcophagus imagery, see chapter 4.

138. On the issue of visual narratives on Roman mythological sarcophagi, see especially Brilliant 1984.
139. As mentioned above, Bettini has drawn attention to the “triangle of correspondences between the person, the portrait, and the phantom” in this myth that nevertheless constitutes a broader cultural model of the operations and mediations of desire and longing in the Greco-Roman tradition (but which could easily be projected across a variety of other contexts if one thinks, for example, of Hans Belting’s iconological theory of “image-medium-body”). Bettini 1999, 12. Cf. Belting 2011.
140. See especially Frel 1970, 170–177, with further bibliography.
141. MMA 25.116; BM1876,0903.2.
142. Cf. chapter 4.
143. On the Roman *imagines*, see especially Daut 1975; Flower 1996; and Crowley 2016a.
144. Cicero, *On the Republic* 6.10, adapted.
145. Zanker and Ewald 2012.
146. I wish to thank Richard Neer for drawing my attention to this fact.
147. Hölscher 2004; Perry 2005.
148. Bartoli 1697, Tav. 54ff; cf. *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919, 498–500).
149. Winckelmann 1767, 164–165.
150. Warburg, *WLA* III.102.3.3, Mnemosyne: *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 3.
151. Both quoted in Didi-Huberman 2017, 3 and 5, respectively.
152. Didi-Huberman 2017, 5–6.
153. *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919).
154. On the Mnemosyne atlas, see Gombrich 1970, 283–306; and, more recently, Didi-Huberman 2017, *passim*; and Michaud 2004.
155. As quoted by Gombrich 1970, 179, from the 1903–1906 notebooks of Warburg.
156. Didi-Huberman 2017, 26ff. Cf. Tylor 1903, 1–25.
157. Didi-Huberman 2017, 11. For a nuanced reexamination of Warburg’s Nietzschean legacy, see especially Wood 2014. I wish to thank Stephen Campbell for this reference.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4.414–419; I use the translation of Porter 2016, 446.
2. Steinberg 1972, 237.
3. On the invisibility of Hades, see Homer, *Iliad* 5.844–845; Plato, *Phaedo* 80d and 81c; cf. Plato, *Cratylus* 404b, for a refutation of this etymology.
4. I borrow this distinction of invisibility from Derrida 1995, 90: “There is a visible invisible, an invisible of the order of the visible that I can keep in secret by keeping it out of sight. This invisible can be artificially kept from sight while remaining within what one can call exteriority (if I hide a nuclear arsenal in underground silos or hide explosives in a cache, there is a visible surface involved; and if I hide a part of my body under clothes or a veil, it is a matter of concealing one surface beneath another; whatever one conceals in this way becomes invisible but remains within the order of visibility; it remains constitutively visible. In the same way but according to a different structure,

what one calls the interior organs of the body—my heart, my kidneys, my blood, my brain—are naturally said to be invisible, but they are still of the order of visibility: an operation or accident can expose them or bring them to the surface; their interiority is provisional and bringing their invisibility into view is something that can be proposed or promised).” For a discussion of the visibility of ghosts in lamplight, see Felton 1999, 55ff. On the aesthetics of sculpted drapery in Greek art, see Neer 2010a, 104–141.

5. Homer, *Iliad* 23.100; Seneca, *Octavia* 593.
6. On Roman funerary rites, see especially Toynbee 1996, 43–72, and Bodel 1999.
7. Lucian, *On Funerals* 2.
8. Lucian, *The Lover of Lies* 24.
9. On issues of visibility and invisibility with special reference to the realm of the ghostly and the Underworld, see especially Frontisi-Ducroux 2006 and 2008.
10. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 263.
11. The mosaic has been very minimally published, appearing briefly in only four scholarly venues: *LIMC* VII, 1 (s.v. “Tantalos,” B18), 842, which briefly describes the mosaic and lists it as unpublished, but does not illustrate it; Pettenò 2004, 84n4, 218, which briefly lists the depicted figures but no further discussion or analysis; Ben Abed 2006, 126, plates 73–74, which does not describe the mosaic but illustrates it being lifted after conservation (in the context of a discussion of conservation techniques); and finally, Brilliant 2017, 146–147, which includes a brief description of the iconography and includes an illustration, but no bibliography. I was able to locate a brief record of the mosaic in the photographic collection at the Getty Research Institute (GCPA 0058757, s.v. “Mosaics—Roman”). The record, which indicates that the mosaic came from Summa Galleries (Beverly Hills, CA) at the time, includes a photograph of the unconserved mosaic assembled on the ground in twenty-two pieces. The mosaic was conserved at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu and was subsequently exhibited while on loan at the San Antonio Museum of Art. It went back on the market in 2008, when it was sold by Fortuna Fine Arts, Ltd., in New York City, and is now in a private collection. According to the 2008 sale catalog from Fortuna Fine Arts, Ltd. (included in my bibliography under the gallery name), the mosaic (lot no. 50) was “Formerly in an American Private Collection; previously the Property of a Swiss Private Collector, acquired in the 1960s.” I owe many debts to the people who helped me with this object along the way: first of all, to Richard Brilliant, who first brought it to my attention in the Fortuna Fine Arts, Ltd., catalog; to the curators and curatorial interns at the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Villa for assisting me with my queries on the piece and locating the invaluable record; to Sarah Cox of Fortuna Fine Arts, Ltd., who generously provided me with a high-resolution file of the image and contacted the collector who consented to its publication; to Elizabeth Marlowe for consultation on the ethics of publishing unprovenanced antiquities; and last, but certainly not least, to Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, who suggested that on stylistic grounds, it seems possible that the mosaic might be Italian and perhaps datable to the early third century at the earliest (personal correspondence). Sadly, the lack of any secure provenance for this object (from the actual findspot to the threadbare account of its ownership) will forever

hamper our ability to situate this mosaic in the same way as the others I discuss in this chapter. Still, given that it has already appeared in a small handful of scholarly venues, I believe it is important to bring this piece further out into the open in order to initiate a more robust scholarly dialogue about its object history and historical significance.

12. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.55.
13. Porter 2016.
14. Porter 2016, 147ff.
15. Porter 2016, 161.
16. Homer, *Iliad* 20.61ff, trans. Richard Lattimore. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* 1.6.
17. Longinus, *On the Sublime* 1.6.
18. Seneca the Younger, *Trojan Women* 172–174, 178–180.
19. Cf. Statius, *Thebaid* 4.520–524: “The Elysian void (*chaos*) is revealed, the capacious darkness of hidden earth bursts asunder, woods and black rivers come to view: Acheron ejects livid sands, smoking Phlegethon rolls dark fires in his waters and interflowing Styx bars separated ghosts (*Styx discretis interflua manibus obstat*).”
20. Statius, *Thebaid* 2.12–14.
21. Statius, *Thebaid* 2.55–57.
22. Schol. Statius, *Thebaid* 2.32. See especially La Rocca 2008, 29ff, with further bibliography.
23. La Rocca 2008.
24. Berggren and Jones 2002 (Ptolemy, *Geography* 1.1).
25. Berggren and Jones 2002, 58 (Ptolemy, *Geography* 1.1).
26. Berggren and Jones 2002, 58 (Ptolemy, *Geography* 1.1).
27. La Rocca 2008, 18ff.
28. Simon 2014, 23–44.
29. Simon 2014, 30.
30. For numerous references and discussion, see Simon 2014, 32ff.
31. Vitruvius, *De architectura* 8.2.6.
32. Pliny, *Natural History* 3.2.17.
33. Simon 2014, 34ff.
34. Virtuvius and Ptolemy alike were thinking about the world in a global sense according to a conceptual model that had been established by the fourth century BCE and would retain its purchase and authority until the end of the Middle Ages. According to this model, the world was envisioned as a globe whose north and south poles were deemed uninhabitable due to extreme cold and whose equatorial zone was impassable because of extreme heat. Between these extreme climatic zones was the *oikoumene*, or the long, inhabitable “island” of earth comprising the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Libya (i.e., Africa) that were hemmed in by a boundless sea.
35. On the etymology of *chōrographia*, see especially Simon 2014, 30ff; and Olwig 2008, 1843–1861.
36. Sallis 2000, 57–69. Cf. Olwig 2008.
37. Simon 2014, 31.
38. Nicolet 1991.

39. Feldherr 1999, 85–122. Cf. Casagrande-Kim 2012, 16–47.
40. *Historia Augusta, Hadrian*, 26.5–6.
41. McDonald and Pinto 1997, 58–59, suggest that the assemblage of the grotto, theater, and the cryptoporticoes might have constituted the Hades of which Hadrian's biographer speaks, but this remains controversial. Cf. Reggiani 2002 and Bergmann 2001, 165–166.
42. See especially Higgins and Higgins 1996; Baleriaux 2016, 103–121; Connors and Clendenon 2016, 147–188. Cf. Kroonenberg 2013.
43. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.54.2–3; Strabo, *Geography* 6.2.4. Cf. Baleriaux 2016, 105ff. Subscribing to a theory that earthquakes are caused by the movement of subterranean water, Seneca criticizes those who would dismiss the theory simply on the grounds that they can't see the water that the theory asserts: "people who refuse to believe that there exist in the recesses of the earth the gulfs of a vast sea are too reliant on their eyesight, and they don't know how to extend the mind beyond it." Seneca, *Natural Questions* 6.7.5, trans. Williams 2012, 234.
44. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.16.5.
45. Kant 1952, §23ff.
46. Porter 2016, 537.
47. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 1.
48. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 2.
49. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 2.
50. Hence the title *Charon, or the Inspectors* (*Episkopountes*). Lucian's menippea, as Philip Holland writes, "oppose the point of view (the version of 'truth') prevailing in the realm that is being surveyed, not from another point of view (another particular 'truth' as for example, a contrary ideology), but from a position that is indeterminate of itself, whose truth rests in its very unfixity or unapproachable transcendence. The view-from-above represents a principle of otherness. An overseer may engage the work below in dialogue, but may never be absorbed into it." Holland 1979, 272; as quoted in Stewart 1993, 182n26.
51. Strabo, *Geography* 3.4.20, 15.1.50, 17.1.48; Connors 2011, 143–144.
52. Foucault 1995, 195.
53. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 6.
54. Connors 2011, 144ff.
55. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 7.
56. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 23.
57. Lucian, *Charon, or the Inspectors*, 22.
58. Porter 2016, 171–173.
59. On the "Odyssey landscapes" or Esquiline frescoes, see especially Biering 2004.
60. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.25–31.
61. Andreae 1999.
62. The scholarship on landscape in Roman art is considerable. See especially Leach 1988; and, among several other essays by the same author, Bergmann 1994, 49–70. For broader conceptual treatments of the category of landscape, see La Rocca 2008 and

- Spencer 2010. For a theoretical discussion of landscape that also touches on the aesthetics of the sublime, see especially Marin 1999.
63. Dietrich 2010.
 64. Schapiro 1994, 1–32.
 65. Most recently, see O’Sullivan 2007, 497–532.
 66. See especially von Blanckenhagen 1963, 100–146.
 67. On the functions and aesthetics of marble supports in Roman sculpture, see especially Anguissola 2018.
 68. Panofsky 1991. Cf. Davis 2017, 170ff and *passim*.
 69. Spengler 1957, 297.
 70. Panofsky 1991, 41.
 71. Panofsky 1991, 42.
 72. Panofsky 1991, 43. Compare von Blanckenhagen’s assessment of the frieze: “Suggestiveness rather than representation is the aim of the painter, and it is curiously blended with completeness in all details. The result has the effect of a dream” (von Blanckenhagen 1963, 131).
 73. Panofsky’s text shows only the “left” panel of the Underworld scenes with the rock formation.
 74. It should be mentioned here that the detail reproduced in the most widely read English translation of the essay (Panofsky 1991) corresponds to the wrong detail of the frescoes; I refer here to Panofsky’s original essay.
 75. On techniques of vivid description in ekphrasis, see especially Webb 2016.
 76. Stansbury-O’Donnell 1990, 213–235.
 77. Goethe 1804, 9–24.
 78. Summers 2003, 439.
 79. Summers 2003, 440.
 80. Riepenhausen and Riepenhausen 1805.
 81. On this and the Riepenhausen brothers’ reconstruction, see Faedo 1986, 5–15. Cf. Rosenblum 1969, 26–27.
 82. Robert 1897b.
 83. Robert 1897b, 5.
 84. Pfuhl 1923, 667, as quoted in Panofsky 1991, 107.
 85. Rodenwaldt 1916, 123.
 86. Panofsky 1981, 23. Cf. Holly 1984, 84ff.
 87. Panofsky 1991, 43.
 88. Panofsky 1991, 15–16. Equally apposite here is Heinrich Wölfflin’s contention that “Not everything is possible at all times. Vision itself has a history, and the revelation of these visual strata must be regarded as the primary task of art history.” Wölfflin 1932, 11.
 89. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.534.
 90. Tirana, National Archaeological Museum (Albania), inv. 5030. Cf. Franke 1983, 59; Cabanes 1986, 1, 136; Ceka 1988, 40n324; Rouveret 2004, 113–114. Unfortunately, no inscription survives.
 91. For another example of stairs associated with the Underworld journey on a sarcophagus,

- gus of the Roman period, see Borchhardt and Birbaumer-Borchardt 2001, 70 (while the authors assert that a ladder is represented here, it seems clear that small steps, not rungs, are depicted in the faceted planes of relief).
92. For a recent account of the aesthetics of relief sculpture in classical art, see especially Neer 2010a, 182–214.
 93. On the *dexiosis*, see especially Breuer 1995, 15–39, who traces the changed meaning of the motif (particularly in relation to the *polis* structure and the increased emphasis on individuality) in the Hellenistic period. Cf. Davies 1985, 627–640.
 94. Biering 2004.
 95. Homer, *Odyssey* 4.824 and 835.
 96. Seneca the Younger, *Hercules* 668–674.
 97. For the *hoi polloi*, see Homer, *Iliad* 11.42; for the *muria nekrôn*, see Homer, *Odyssey* 11.632. On these formulae and further examples, see Bardel 2000, 148–149.
 98. Michel 1982.
 99. On the issue of background figures and visibility, see especially Didi-Huberman 2009, 16–22.
 100. On the literary and iconographic tradition, see especially Keuls 1974.
 101. Leach 1988. Cf. De Lacey 1964, 49–55.
 102. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.1–13.
 103. Leach 1988, 135. It is striking to compare Lucretius’s morbid fascination with the spectacular nature of shipwrecks seen from a distance (and Leach’s reading of it against the *Odyssey* landscapes) with Jonathan Crary’s interpretation of Théodore Géricault’s *Raft of the Medusa* as evoking a similar “perceptual dislocation” constructed in the nineteenth-century attraction of the painted panorama: Crary 2002, 5–25.
 104. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.78–79.
 105. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.120.
 106. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 3.978–979.
 107. Reinhardt 2004, 30. On the iconography of Underworld punishments and the damned, see especially Pettenò 2004.
 108. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 3.1023.
 109. Porter 2016, 25ff.
 110. O’Sullivan 2007.
 111. Vitruvius, *De architectura* 7.5.2; cf. Tybout 1989, 55–107; La Rocca 2008, 30ff; O’Sullivan 2007, 509ff.
 112. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 422. Cf. Bardel 2000, 150.
 113. Hickman 1938, 25; Bieber 1961, 146.
 114. See especially Flickinger 1918, 104–107; Fiechter 1937; Bieber 1961, 77–78.
 115. *Vita Aeschyli* 14.
 116. Given that many of Pollux’s lists appear to derive from third-century BCE sources, scholars have assumed that the Charonian steps were characteristic of Hellenistic theater design. For these sources, see Pickard-Cambridge 1956, 175–176. The archaeological documentation of the theater at Eretria is fully presented in Fiechter 1937, and has

- been upheld in more recent scholarship (see below). Clifford Ashby, the most skeptical of cited references to Pollux on this topic, maintains that Eretria and Argos offer two “verifiable” sets of evidence for the Charonian steps: Ashby 1999, 11. On the more recent evidence at Argos, see especially Moretti 1988, 716–717; and Catling 1986–1987, 3–61.
117. Although she focuses on fifth-century Greek theater, see the suggestive account of Padel 1992, 336–365. There is a suggestive affinity between the effect produced by the Charonian steps and what Theodor Adorno identified as the phantasmagorical nature of Wagnerian theater: Adorno 2005, 74 (see the epilogue for more on Adorno and the phantasmagoria).
 118. Roller 2018, 130. On the political uses of ghosts in the transition from republic to principate, see especially Dufallo 2007.
 119. Andreae 1962, 106–117.
 120. Zarmakoupi 2014, 223–229. In a different historical and cultural context, Victor I. Stoichita has likened windows and niches in early modern “metapainting” (that is, a pictorial reflexivity or “self-awareness” of the picture *qua* picture) to the effect of a “hiatus” or “caesura” in the mimetic transparency of the depicted scene: Stoichita 1997; cf. Didi-Huberman 2007. For a cogent theoretical introduction to these issues in the ancient context, see especially Platt and Squire 2017, 66ff.
 121. For this distinction, see Summers 2003.
 122. On the interiors of Roman tombs, see especially Feraudi-Gruénais 2001 and, with regard to columbaria in particular, Borbonus 2014. For stimulating approaches to the phenomenology of Roman sepulchral spaces with special reference to sarcophagi, see especially Bielfeldt 2005, 306–328; and Meinecke 2014. On Greek myths in Roman funereal contexts more generally, see Newby 2016, 228–272. On the corresponding use of myths as a structuring principle for domestic contexts, see Bergmann 1999, 81–107; and Lorenz 2008.
 123. Zanker and Ewald 2012. Cf. Newby 2016, 228–272.
 124. For a recent consideration of the role of myths in Roman funerary contexts, see Newby 2016, 228–272.
 125. Cf. Casagrande-Kim 2012.
 126. Plautus, *The Captives* 998–1000. Cf. Pettenò 2004, 77; and Toynbee 1996, 35. This quote furnishes the title of Pettenò 2004. Cf. Bielfeldt 2007.
 127. See especially Koortbojian 1995 and Newby 2016.
 128. Janni 1984. For an application of Janni’s approach in a literary context, see Skempis and Ziogas 2014, 1–18.
 129. The term has its origins in the psychological theory of Kurt Lewin; cf. Lewin 1938, 22–23.
 130. For examples of these approaches, see especially Muth 1999, 189–212; and Molholt 2011, 287–303.
 131. Molholt 2011, 287.
 132. Toynbee 1996, 74ff.

133. See especially Muth 1998.
134. Also known as the “Tomb of the Quadriga.” See especially Feraudi-Gruénais 2001, 53–56; Liverani 2010, 108–113; and Newby 2016, 248–250.
135. There are at least two others.
136. Toynbee 1996, 63. On funerary banquets, see especially Dunbabin 2004, 103–140.
137. Didi-Huberman 2007.
138. See especially Andrae 1963, 11–87; Lawrence 1965, 207–222; Haarløv 1977, 26–30; Galli 2004, 73–90; Platt 2012, 223–224; Thomas 2011, 403ff; Elsner 2012, 178–195; Newby 2016, 240ff; and Zanker and Ewald 2012, 29–30.
139. Platt 2012, 213–227.
140. Anguissola 2018.
141. Calza 1940, 164–165. For the inversion of the technique, see Becatti 1987, 536, where he describes its effect as “fantomatico”; and Bragantini 1994, 53–74.
142. Petersen 2006, 232.
143. Clarke 1979.
144. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.240–243.
145. Hardie 2009, 157; and Hass 2016, 114–115.
146. Gale 2004, 118–119. Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.78: *quaere religio pedibus subjecta vicissim obteritur*.
147. Merleau-Ponty 2005, 330.
148. Cf. Elcott 2016b.
149. On the black and white costume of ghosts, see especially Winkler 1980.
150. Herodotus, *The Histories* 8.27, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10.1.11, trans. W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
151. Tacitus, *Germania* 43.5.
152. Echoing this view in Winkler 1980, 160–165, Debbie Felton asserts that “the importance of ghosts’ descriptions is not necessarily whether they are black or white as that they are not any color.” Felton 1999, 105n89.
153. See especially Bradley 2011, with further bibliography.
154. Kalderon 2015, 41–42. Cf. Crowley 2016b, 225–227.
155. Aristotle, *De Anima* 425b, 15–25. Cf. Agamben 1999a.
156. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 67.9.1–3.
157. See Gutsfeld 2010, 25–33; and D’Arms 1999, 306–307.
158. Cf. Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, 576: Odysseus’s music “rings out clearer in those unhearing [*surdīs*] realms.”
159. See especially Petersen 2006, 185ff; and Borg 2013, 20ff, with further bibliography.
160. Borg 2013, 22.
161. Aldrete 2007.
162. For the publication of the excavations, see Angelucci et al. 1990, 49–113. On the Tomba della Mietitura, see 90–106 (Ida Baldassare), and on the Alcestis mosaic in particular, 106–109 (Irene Bragantini).
163. Newby 2016, 238–239.

164. Euripides, *Alcestis* 365–368.
165. Euripides, *Alcestis* 897–899.
166. Calza 1928, 147–164. Cf. Andreae 1963, 41ff; Mielsch 1975, 161–162.
167. Squarciapino et al. 1958, 121–124; cf. Heinzelmann 2000, 265–270.
168. On the aesthetics of the frame in ancient visual culture, see especially Platt and Squire 2017.
169. For a brief description of the frame in this painting with further bibliography, see La Rocca et al. 2015, 451 (Claudia Valeri). Cf. Platt and Squire 2017.
170. See, for example, Hölscher 1984, 283–294.
171. *The Muse's Song: Selections of Ancient Art*. Catalog, Fortuna Fine Arts, Ltd. (New York, 2008), no. 50.
172. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.126, 6.128, and 6.129, respectively.
173. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.485.
174. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.492.
175. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.72–73. Although it is a wall painting and not a floor mosaic, cf. Petronius 29 for an example of such a response. I would especially like to thank Ruth Bielfeldt for helping me think through these issues.
176. Molholt 2011, 288.
177. In domestic contexts especially, for example, it is certainly possible to think about what Whitney Davis would call the “natural visual perspective” of reclining viewers. But in a funerary context this seems less likely.
178. Here I draw from Davis’s concepts of “bivirtuality” and “birotationality.” Davis 2017, 11–177 and passim.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Baxandall 1995.
2. Baxandall 1995, 33.
3. Baxandall 1995, 34.
4. On the visibility of grief in an archaic funerary context, see especially Estrin 2016.
5. On *aidōs* in Greek literature, see especially Cairns 1993; on *pudor* in Latin literature, see Kaster 2005. Given that this chapter is dealing with the imagery of Greek myths on Roman sarcophagi in the cultural climate of the Second Sophistic when the boundaries between Greek and Roman styles and sensibilities becomes increasingly and self-consciously blurred, I do not feel that it is either necessary or productive to draw a sharp distinction between the two concepts in the foregoing discussion (except in particular cases, as indicated).
6. Kerényi 1962, 120.
7. Agamben 1999b, 107.
8. Agamben 1999b, 106.
9. Bryson 1988, 87–109.
10. Ferrari 2002, 72–86. On the relationship between veiling and *aidōs* as it pertains to sculptural aesthetics (in addition to vase-painting), I draw heavily from Neer 2010a,

162–168. As he notes, “Because the iconography of *aidōs* is relatively straightforward, it provides a matrix for understanding more complex examples” (164). As Kaster observes, the Romans likewise associated *pudor* with garments. A particularly vivid example he cites is in the *Apologia* of Apuleius, in which the philosopher, defending himself in the courtroom against the charge of using black magic (discussed in chapter 1), likewise takes pains to defend his honor against the putative disguise of false modesty, asserting that “Like a garment, a sense of *pudor* is treated all the more carelessly the more worn it is . . .” (*Apology* 3), Kaster 2005, 38.

11. Ferrari 1997, 6.
12. Lucian, *Amores* 13.
13. Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 10.
14. Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 4.230M, as translated and discussed in Carson 1986, 20ff.
15. Ewald 2012, 48–49, drawing on the Lacanian notions of fantasy in the work of Slavoj Žižek.
16. On the iconography of ghosts and their clothing in the Middle Ages, see especially Schmitt 1998, 201–205.
17. Rome, Vatican Museums, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. 10450. Cf. *ASR* II (Robert 1890b, 168–171, n. 155, plate 54); Sichtermann and Koch 1975, 52ff, n. 53, plate 133, 2, 135–140; Zanker and Ewald 2012, 79–80, 361–364; Bielfeldt 2005.
18. Bielfeldt 2005, 289–328.
19. Homer, *Odyssey* II.416–426.
20. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 228–246; as described by Electra in Aeschylus’s *Libation Bearers* 980–1017.
21. On the distinction between occurrent versus dispositional *aidōs* (discussed in further detail below), see especially the introduction in Cairns 1993, 5–14; for a related distinction on *pudor*, see Kaster 2005, 16–17.
22. On the sarcophagi and their conditions of visibility in the sepulchral context (in terms of both the available space and lighting), see Zanker and Ewald 2012, 24ff. For more recent work on the archaeological context of sarcophagi and changes in the long-term use of tombs, see especially Borg 2013 and Meinecke 2014. On the viewing conditions of the Orestes sarcophagus, see Bielfeldt 2005, 289–328.
23. Derrida 1994, 6–7.
24. Derrida 1994, 8. On the helmet and visor effect in Derrida’s reading of *Hamlet*, see especially Montag 1999, 68–82.
25. Derrida 1994, 6. Cf. Waldenfels 2002, 63–81.
26. Mulvey 1975, 6–18. See also Rose 1986.
27. In this context, however, we are no longer dealing with explicitly *Greek* conceptions of shame. Rather than *aidōs*, the Romans had *pudor*, which, similarly circumscribing a range of emotions including shame and honor, belongs to a different cultural context. Like *aidōs*, however, *pudicitia* has equal bearing on men: Valerius Maximus says that it strengthens “men and women alike” (Valerius Maximus 6.1.*praef*). On Roman conceptions of *pudor*, see especially Kaster 2005, 28–65, with further bibliography.
28. Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 493.

29. Ferrari 1997, 10.
30. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 63.1246. Cf. Beazley 1963, 1652; Vermeule 1966, 1–22; Bernal 1997, 93–107.
31. On the concept of transparency as it pertains to the surface effect of sculpted drapery, see Neer 2010a, 104–141.
32. Now in Naples, Archaeological Museum, inv. 9112 (originally from the House of the Tragic Poet, VI 8, 3). On the Greek original, see especially Croisille 1963, 209–225; and Bergmann 1995, 84–85.
33. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.72: *oratorum laudibus celebrata*.
34. Cicero, *De Oratore* 21.74; Pliny, *Natural History* 35.73–74.
35. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.13.13. Cf. Valerius Maximus, 8.11.6.
36. Platt 2014, 211–231. Cf. Perry 2002, 154–156.
37. Koortbojian 2005, 285–306.
38. Pollitt 1974, 201–205; Rouveret 1989, 383–401; on the differences between *phantasia* and *mimesis*, see Schweitzer 1934, 286–300; Sörbom 1966; Halliwell 2002.
39. Even so, as we shall see in the following section, the metaphor of “impression” keeps *phantasia* tied to the sensory realm.
40. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.13.
41. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.6.
42. Cicero, *De Legibus* 1.9. For a stimulating account of the Roman semantics of the face, see especially Bettini 2000, 131–168.
43. Cf. Robert 1890b, 176n163; Bol 1994, 426n531; Bielfeldt 2005, 159–160.
44. Hall 2005, 53–76. Cf. Zanobi 2014.
45. van Zyl Smit 2010, 25–36.
46. Pliny, *Natural History* 7.77; cf. Kaster 2005, 172n104.
47. Ewald 2005, 55–73.
48. As is well known, the symbolic and allegorizing readings of sarcophagus imagery were developed by Cumont 1942, which provoked an equally well-known critique from Nock 1946, 140–170. For Alcestis on Roman mythological sarcophagi, see in general Schmidt 1981.
49. Peek 1960, 224ff, n. 393 (Olympias), and 274ff, n. 463 (Pomptilla). The sentiment is clear enough in Plato’s *Symposium*, where Diotima poses to Socrates the rhetorical question of whether Alcestis would have laid down her life for Admetus if she “had not expected to win a deathless memory for valor which now we keep.” Plato, *Symposium* 208D. On the iconography of Alcestis’s piety and virtue, see especially Mucznik 1999.
50. Rome, Vatican Museums, Galleria Chiaramonti, I 3, inv. no. 1195; CIL XIV 371. *ASR* III, 1 (Robert 1897a, 31 no. 26, plate 7); Blome 1978, 435–445; Wood 1978, 499–510; *ASR* XII, 1 (Grassinger 1999, 110–128; 227–228, n. 76); Zanker and Ewald 2012, 306–310; Newby 2011, 195–197; Bielfeldt forthcoming, 75–78. I sincerely thank Ruth Bielfeldt for sharing this paper with me.
51. Wood 1978. While that separation might conventionally be understood within the metaphors of marital *concordia*, it is significant, for example, that the inscription

on the lid of an Alcestis sarcophagus from St. Aignan indicates that the casket was commissioned by a mother for her daughter, doubtless as a means of comparing the paradigmatic virtue of the heroine to her own offspring, but crucially without the self-sacrifice to a husband, or indeed to any male figure whatsoever. Cf. *ASR* XII, 1 (Grasinger 1999, 227n75).

52. Ferrari 2002, 186ff and n. 45. Cf. Pollux, *Onomasticon* 2.59 and 3.36.
53. For a brief overview, see especially Jones 1993, 39–52.
54. In general, see Hall and Wyles 2008.
55. See especially Lada-Richards 2007.
56. For a suggestive account of this rich yet understudied topic (which focuses more on *vita humana* rather than mythological sarcophagi), see Huskinson 2008, 87–109.
57. Ewald 2005, 63.
58. See especially Kampen 1981 and *ASR* I, 4 (Amedick 1991).
59. On the recurrent theme of men overcoming death with women being subjected to the tortures of Necessity, see Segal 1993, 39ff.
60. Fittschen 1984, 141–143.
61. Rome, Casino Rospigliosi. Cf. *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919, 461ff); Zanker and Ewald 2012, 385–387.
62. *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919, 495n419a).
63. On the ritual and iconography of the *anakalypteria*, see especially Gherchanoc 2006, 239–266. Cf. Llewellyn-Jones 2003 and Ferrari 2002, 186ff.
64. Festus, *De Verborum Significatu* 174.20 L., as translated and discussed in Hersch 2010, 98–99. Cf. Treggiari 1993.
65. Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins* 17.2–3, trans. Geoffrey D. Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2004).
66. Zanker and Ewald 2012.
67. Zanker and Ewald 2012, 310.
68. Bielfeldt forthcoming.
69. Euripides, *Alcestis* 1116. I return to this scene in a different context in chapter 4.
70. On the deathliness of sight, see especially Vernant 1991, 111–140; and, more recently, Turner 2016, 123–142.
71. Euripides, *Alcestis* 1121–1128.
72. Euripides, *Alcestis* 1123, 1125, and 1127. Neer helpfully situates this string of reactions in relation to the aesthetic category of *thauma*, or wonder: Neer 2010a, 60–61.
73. On the relationship between the dead and the sculpted image, see especially Steiner 2001, 136–155, 192n29.
74. Hankinson 1995, 109–110; and Hankinson 2003, 268–300.
75. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.228.
76. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.254.
77. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.249.
78. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.255.
79. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.227–228.

80. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.230.
81. Baxandall 1985, 74–104.
82. Keane 2015, 83ff.
83. Juvenal, *Satires* 6.652–654.
84. Juvenal, *Satires* 6.467–468.
85. Regarding the nudity and the “gratuitous” detail of the hunt scene here, see Hallett 2005, 216.
86. Loraux 1987, 29.
87. Dickmann 2005, 187–204.
88. Vatican, Galleria dei Candelabri, inv. no. 2465. Cf. Winckelmann 1767, 164–165; *ASR* III, 3 (Robert 1919, 498–500, n. 423); Blome 1978, 445–449; Zanker and Ewald 2012, 392–396; Newby 2011, 197ff; Platt 2012, 221–223; Bielfeldt forthcoming, 79–86. On the Santa Chiara sarcophagus, see especially Andreae 1963, 37ff.
89. Enormously helpful here is the quantitative data offered in Ewald 2004, 229–275.
90. Zanker and Ewald 2012, 94–95. Previous studies, however, saw the potential for a happier tone, despite the ending of the myth in both literature and art: Andreae 1963, 34ff; and Blome 1978.
91. Butler 1990, 168, 191, 197, and *passim*.
92. On portrait heads on Roman sarcophagi, see especially Fittschen 1984 and Newby 2011. On the problem of unfinished portrait heads on Roman sarcophagi, see especially Huskinson 1998 and Platt 2018b. For statuary, including the category of funerary portraiture and its links to pantomime, see Kousser 2007, 673–691.
93. Davies 1985, 627–640.
94. Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead* 428–429.
95. On the iconography of marriage on Roman sarcophagi, see especially *ASR* I, 3 (Reinsberg 2006).
96. Alexandridis 2014, 67–102, and on the popularity of the type specifically, 89–93. Cf. Fabricius 2007.
97. For a stimulating account of sexuality in the Second Sophistic and its historical recursions that seems especially apposite here, see especially Richlin 2017. On the transformation of gender and sexuality in Roman portraiture, see especially Kampen 1996; Varner 2008; and Birk 2011.
98. Astonishingly, this detail has received virtually no scholarly attention, with the exception of Peter Blome, who thought that it was simply a convenient way for the patron to retain his modesty, but without further comment or allusion to the Venusian iconography. On the funerary statues, see D’Ambra 1996, 219–232; and Alexandridis 2014, 67–102. The one illustrated here from Dresden (SKD inv. Hm 394), belonging to the so-called “Syracusan” type, has been tentatively identified as the princess Lucilla (and dated accordingly to 166–169 CE): Schroder 2009, 297–301, n51.
99. Philostratus the Younger, *Heroicus* 10.4.
100. Whitmarsh 2013, 114–115.
101. Whitmarsh 2013, 106.

102. Philostratus the Younger, *Heroicus* 11.1.
103. Philostratus the Younger, *Heroicus* 11.2.
104. Petronius, *Satyricon* 140. Cf. Bowersock 1994, 112–113.
105. For a stimulating account of how the ghost of Protesilaus inverts the normative stakes of eyewitness accounts in the practice of Homeric revisionism (discussed in the introduction), see Kim 2010, 175–215. Cf. Zeitlin 2001 and Maclean, Berenson, and Aitken 2001.
106. Catullus 68.74–75. Cf. Lyne 1998, 200–212.
107. Bielfeldt forthcoming, 80–82. On the archaeological context of the tomb on the Via Latina, see Riccardi 1966, 151–182. On the problem of unfinished portrait heads on Roman sarcophagi, see especially Andreae 1984, 109–128; Huskinson 1998, 129–158; Smith 2008, 347–394; Birk 2013; and Platt 2018b.
108. Bielfeldt forthcoming, 83.
109. Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 2.9.5. Cf. Statius, *Silvae* 3.5.49.
110. On the iconography of crossed legs, an unvaryingly feminine posture in Roman art, see especially Davies 2005, 215–238.
111. On the sexual connotations of Laodamia's posture and drooping garment in this reclining position, see especially Roller 2003.
112. The nature of the break proves this admittedly indistinct trace, since the contour of the remaining marble is simply not wide enough to allow for the head to be positioned in a forward-facing (i.e., right-hand) direction.
113. Calza 1928, 155–156; Andreae 1963, 41ff; Mielsch 1975, 161.
114. Lowrie 2009, 176ff.
115. Propertius, *Elegies* 1.19.7–12.
116. Pliny, *Natural History* 16.238.19; *Palatine Anthology* 7.141 and 385.
117. On the murder of Regilla and the matter of Herodes's mourning, see especially Pomeroy 2007 and Kampen 2009, 64–81.
118. On Regilla's estate on the Via Appia, see especially Tobin 1997, 355–362; and Galli 2002, 110ff.
119. See especially Mallwitz 1964 and Geagan 1964.
120. *A makar hostis edeime nenē polin, oun[o]ma d'authēn*
Rēgillēs kaleōn, zōei agallomenos.
Zōō d'a[ch]numenos to moi oikia tetuktai
nosph[i] philēs alochou kai domos hēmitelēs.
ōs ara toi thnētoisi theoi biotēn [e]kerasant[es],
cha[r]mata t'ēd' anias geitonas amphis echo[un].
 Translated in Gleason 2010, 125–162.
121. Gleason 2010, 142.
122. See, for example, Foley 1978, 7–26.
123. Valladares 2012, 319; and Valladares 2005, 206–242.
124. Gleason 2008. Cf. Connolly 2001, 75–96.
125. Kampen 2009, 81.

126. Clark 1984, 79. For a stimulating account of Clark's argument as it pertains to the "iconographic succession," see Davis 2011, 216–229.
127. Lucian, *The Dance* 73. Cf. Lada-Richards 2007, 51ff.
128. Lucian, *The Dance* 73.
129. Kampen 1996, 233–246.
130. Zanker 1999, 119–131.
131. Zanker 1999, 130.
132. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 19.12.
133. On this ethical turn of deconstruction and the figuration of the ghost as a kind of Levinasian Other in the late period of Derrida's work, see Davis 2005, 373–379.
134. Derrida 1994, 11.
135. On the matter of Alcestis specifically, see Trammell 1941, 144–150.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Herder 2002, 36.
2. On the Brescia sarcophagus, see especially Stella 2003, 106ff, with further bibliography; for the San Celso sarcophagus, see Brandenburg 1987, 96 (also treating the Brescia sarcophagus), and more recently, Benay and Rafanelli 2015, 20–27, with further bibliography, as well as Feist 2014, 174ff.
3. On the dynamics of concealment and revelation in early Christian sarcophagi, see especially Elsner 2012, 178–195.
4. See Holmes 2010 and 2017. For an important exception to the European philosophical tradition that we "have" bodies, see Martin Heidegger's critique of Friedrich Nietzsche's naturalism: "We do not 'have' a body in the way we carry a knife in a sheath. Neither is the body (*Leib*) a natural body (*Körper*) that merely accompanies us and which we can establish, expressly or not, as being also 'at hand.' We do not 'have' a body; rather, we 'are' bodily . . ." Heidegger 1980, 98.
5. Holmes 2017, 26–32. According to Holmes, the novelty of Hippocratic approaches to the body helps bear out the merits of Bruno Snell's influential thesis that Homer lacked a concept of the body (cf. Snell 1953). For an engagement with the so-called New Materialisms (see below, n. 11) in tandem with the world of Homer, see Purves 2015. Here and elsewhere, the work of the political scientist Jane Bennett has been hugely influential (cf. Bennett 2010). Yet it needs to be stressed that Bennett explicitly follows a philosophical genealogy via Gilles Deleuze, Baruch Spinoza, and ultimately Lucretius. Crucially, then, this work is anchored in a commitment to a very specific kind of naturalism/materialism that undertakes nothing less than the demythologization of the world—a worldview that in my view seems incompatible with that of Homer.
6. Didi-Huberman 2005, 27ff; and Didi-Huberman 2007, 97–152.
7. Didi-Huberman 2005, 28.
8. Scarry 1985, 161ff.
9. Knappett 2006.
10. Scarry 1985, 281ff.

11. Scarry 1985, 285 (original emphasis). The literature on the so-called New Materialisms is considerable, but (in addition to Purves and Bennett, cited above in n. 5) see especially Brown 2004; on the implications of the material turn in art history and material culture, see especially Roberts 2017; for a similar treatment for ancient art, see Platt 2016. For more archaeological and anthropological approaches, see, for example, Witmore 2014 and Ingold 2012.
12. Scarry 1985, 290.
13. Scarry 1985, 315.
14. Scarry 1985, 216.
15. Needless to say, the literature on this painting is vast, but see Most 2005, 160ff, for further bibliography. More recently, see especially Hurtig 2014; Benay 2014; Fried 2010, 83–86.
16. Fried 2010, 84.
17. Platt 2012, 213–227.
18. See especially Brown 1981 and Bynum 2011.
19. On this topic, see especially Chandler, Davidson, and Harootunian 1994; and Daston 2007.
20. On the typological exegesis of early Christian art in relation to the culture of *paideia* in the Second Sophistic and late antiquity, see especially Elsner 1998, 8.
21. Most 2005, 50ff. Cf. Scarry 1985, 214ff.
22. On the dominant intramissionist and extramissionist theories as well as more idiosyncratic explanations, see especially Lindberg 1976, 1–17.
23. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 121.5, trans. J. Gibb, in Schaff 1888. On Augustine's language-games, see Wittgenstein 2009, §1–3.
24. See Montiglio 2018 and, in the same volume, Conybeare 2018.
25. See especially Nelson 2000. Cf. Lindberg 1976, 1–17, and the recent collection of essays in Squire 2016.
26. On the metaphor of wax impressions in ancient art and thought, see especially Platt 2006, 233–257. On the relationship between *phantasia* and the category of the divine, see also Platt 2009.
27. See Purves 2013 as well as Purves 2018.
28. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 240ff. I am grateful to Seth Estrin for reminding me of this passage in relation to the physicality of sight.
29. On this point, see especially Didi-Huberman's analysis of Fra Angelico's colored marbles in Didi-Huberman 1995. Cf. Barry 2017.
30. In the very different context of Pompeii, but relating to a similar set of issues, see Michel 1982.
31. AB 15, trans. F. Nisetich in Gutzwiller 2005. On the aesthetics of the *Lithika* in general, see especially (in the same volume) Kuttner 2005; Zanker 2004, 62–63; Smith 2004, 105–117; David Petrain 2005; Porter 2010, 481–490; and Elsner 2014.
32. Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 58.
33. On the semiotics of colored marble, see for example Schneider 1986.

34. Barry 2007, 632. On the corpus of sarcophagi treating the Crossing of the Red Sea, see especially Rizzardi 1970.
35. Pliny, *Natural History* 37.24. *Sardonyles olim, sicut ex ipso nomine apparet, intellegebantur in candore sarda, hoc est veluti carne ungui hominis inposita, et utroque translucido.*
36. Pliny also discusses a “sarcophagus stone” (*sarcophagus lapis*) that eats away at whatever is placed against or within it: *Natural History* 37.27.
37. Pliny, *Natural History* 37.76.
38. Plutarch, *Moralia* 86a. For a broader discussion of the proverb (which reappears in several other texts of diverse disciplines and perspectives) in relation to the art of Polykleitos, see especially Stewart 1978, 124ff.
39. There are echoes of this idea in Persius, *Satire* 1.65, which seems to suggest fingernails gliding over marble to feel the joins between different pieces of stone.
40. The right short side of the sarcophagus has been mistakenly identified by Benay and Rafanelli 2015, 26, as Moses striking the rock (as in Exodus 17:1–7), but the iconography makes this unlikely. On the importance of touch in baptism and its attendant metaphors of marking and sealing (as with a signet ring) in early Christian theology, see Fergusson 2009.
41. See especially Hölscher 2004.
42. On the typology of this statue and its comparanda by other artists discussed below, see Bol 1998.
43. Moon 1995.
44. Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education* 12.10.7. Cf. Hölscher 2004, 93 and 120.
45. See especially Leftwich 1995, 38–51, with further bibliography. Cf. Métraux 1995.
46. van der Eijk 2015.
47. Galen, *The Art of Medicine* 343K.
48. Most 2005, 177. Cf. Schunk-Heller 1995, 13ff.
49. The key text is Didi-Huberman 2017, 11.
50. According to Adolph Hildebrand’s influential account, relief sculpture is unique in that it synthesizes “ideas of form” and “visual impressions.” Building on the philosophical and psychological aspects of Hildebrand’s thesis, Alois Riegl historicized the medium in his periodizations of alternating optical and haptic regimes of visibility and artistic representation (Hildebrand 1994; Riegl 1985). For a synthesis of theories of relief sculpture in critical art history and its implications for classical art history, see Neer 2010a, 183–186. Cf. Platt and Squire 2018.
51. Pliny, *Natural History* 34.19. Cf. Gauer 1980.
52. On the Wounded Amazons at Hadrian’s Villa, see especially Moesch 2000 and Slavazzi 2002. Regarding the aesthetics of similarity in the display of Roman copies, see Koortbojian 2002; with specific reference to the Wounded Amazons at Hadrian’s Villa, see Bartman 1988. On the question of the “free copy” and the adaptability of the Wounded Amazon at Herodes Atticus’s estate at Loukou, see also Perry 2005, 99–108. More generally on the topic of Roman copies and related questions of replication and emulation, see especially Anguissola 2012 and Marvin 2008.

53. On the Baiae cast of the Sciarra Amazon, see especially Landwehr 1985. On issues of sculptural repetition, reproduction, and gender, see Trimble 2011.
54. On the sculptural treatment of the wound in the so-called “Volneratus Deficiens,” see especially Frel 1970.
55. On questions of gender and sexuality in the San Celso sarcophagus, see Benay and Rafanelli 2015.
56. Lochrie 1997.
57. On the penetrability of bodies in ancient Rome, see especially Walters 1997 and Fredrick 2002.
58. Furtwängler 1895, 134n5.
59. Sargent and Therkildsen 2010, 27–49.
60. Didi-Huberman 1984.
61. Cf. Brinkmann and Wünsche 2004.
62. Most 2005, 165. Cf. Platt and Squire 2018, 79ff.
63. Kant 1952, 76 (§14). For a discussion of Kant’s parergon as it pertains to the drapery of classical Greek sculpture, see Neer 2010a, 111ff. Cf. Platt and Squire 2017, 1–99, and especially 52–56.
64. Herder 2002, 54. For a recent treatment of Herder and the aesthetics of touch, see especially Slaney 2018.
65. Herder 2002, 54.
66. Derrida 1987, 17–82.
67. For a technical analysis of this sculpture, see Lulof 2007.
68. Salas 2003, 287–298.
69. Salas 2003, 293.
70. Salas 2003, 293–294. The topic of iconoclasm during this period is vast, but for an introduction see especially Stewart 1999.
71. Didi-Huberman 2007. Cf. Cole 2002.
72. Tertullian, *De idololatria* 3.2–3, trans. J. H. Waszink and J. C. M. Van Winden 1987, 27. Cf. Ando 2015a.
73. Davis 2011, 11ff; and Davis 2017. For some religious people, Davis suggests, an icon “might succeed to ‘the god *X*’ or to ‘*X*-emanation,’ ‘*X*-incarnation,’ or ‘*X*-exemplification,’” thus disqualifying it as a “picture” in Davis’s terminology (defined as “an artifact in visual space that extends visual space into a virtual space of virtual objects,” Davis 2017, 6; elsewhere he defines a “mere picture” as a “depictively marked artifact awaiting someone’s imaging of its pictoriality,” Davis 2017, 65). I do not have the space to develop my argument in such a way that would do justice to the rich complexity of Davis’s argument, but in brief I want to suggest that the idol, perhaps unlike the icon, *requires* the condition of its recognizability as a picture (in whatever form it takes). For my purposes, it is precisely the tension between these two possibilities—seeing the image of Christ as an “*X*-incarnation” on the one hand, and as a “picture of *X*” or, at the extreme, a diabolical pictorialization on the other—that constitutes its power. That being said, it may perhaps be too narrow to construe an icon seen by religious viewers in such a way that does not allow it to succeed to pictoriality

- such that it can only be seen as an “*X*-incarnation.” For an example of that argument, see Gordon 1979, 5–34. For a recent counterargument, see Neer 2017, 145–64.
74. On this point, explored through the philosophy of Richard Wollheim and Ludwig Wittgenstein, see especially Neer 2005.
 75. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, 1.99–100.
 76. Origen, *De principiis* 2.8, trans. and ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson 1905, 249. Cf. Ginzburg 2001.
 77. Roberts and Donaldson 1905, 249.
 78. For the concept of the “statuesque” in Roman art, see the useful discussion of Stewart 2003, 79ff. Cf. Davis 2017, 51ff.
 79. John 20:19.
 80. Cf. Most 2005, 136ff.
 81. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.61, trans. H. Chadwick 1953, 113. The italicized lines are quotations from the *Iliad* 23.66–67.
 82. On the ontological status of ghostly and otherwise disembodied phenomena, see Squire 2018 and Neer 2018.
 83. Sandbach 1975; Long 1974 and 1996.
 84. Frede 1983, 65–93.
 85. Bailey 2002.
 86. Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 5 (*credere est cogitare cum assensione*).
 87. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.403.
 88. Horsfall 1983, 202; Geyer 1989, 46; Stramaglia 1999, 9.
 89. On the issue of the ghost of Patroclus’s appearance, see especially Bardel 2000, 145ff. Cf. Platt 2014b, 185–207.
 90. See especially Messerschmidt 1930, 67 and, more recently, Steuernagel 1998, 19ff. The *hinthial* of Patroclus appears in a similar chest bandage, but without the chinstrap, in a painting depicting the same subject in the François Tomb.
 91. Cf. Celsus, *De medicina* 8.7. Commonly used, they were frequently represented on Greek vases depicting that subject from at least the fifth century onward. See especially Vermeule 1979, 14–15. On bandaged ghosts in south Italian painting, see Chamay 1977–1978; and in Etruscan art, Bonfante and de Grummond 1989. On the iconography of scars in early Greek art, see Boardman 1978. Cf. Pettman 2010.
 92. On the visibility of rhetoric in the earlier Greek context, see especially O’Connell 2017.
 93. See especially Sussman 1987, 125–136; and Schneider 2013 and 2016.
 94. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.1.
 95. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.14.
 96. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.5.
 97. Homer, *Iliad* 23.64ff.
 98. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.5.
 99. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.2.
 100. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.5.
 101. [Quintilian], *Major Declamations* 10.14.
 102. Propertius, *Elegies* 4.7.1–12.

103. Habinek 2016, 21. Cf. Noy 2000, 186–196.
104. For a general introduction to the Vatican Vergil, see especially Wright 1993. On issues of dating and ownership, see Cameron 2004.
105. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.270–279.
106. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.286.
107. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.268ff.
108. Johnson 1973, 339–342. For a scientific study of parchment and its material capacities and limitations, see especially Reed 1972.
109. Pliny, *Natural History* 35.25.
110. Noy 2000 and Habinek 2016.
111. Suetonius, *Caligula* 59.
112. Noy 2000.
113. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.494–499.
114. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.15.
115. For honorable scars obtained through service to country, see Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.660. See especially Evans 1999.
116. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.498–499.
117. On the relations between the iconography of shrouded ghosts and the visibility of shame and modesty, see the previous chapter.
118. Wright 1993, 52 and 109.
119. Especially useful here is Mary Carruthers's observation about the materiality of parchment: "But we should keep in mind the vigorous, if not violent, activity involved in making a mark upon such a physical surface as an animal's skin. One must break it, rough it up, 'wound' it in some way with a sharply pointed instrument. Erasure involved roughing up the physical surface even more: medieval scribes, trying to erase parchment, had to use pumice stones and other scrapers. In other words, writing was always hard physical labor, very hard as well on the surface on which it was being done" (Carruthers 1998, 102). On the later medieval practice of conceptually equating the body of Christ with the parchment on which it was depicted, see especially Bynum 2011, 89–93, with further bibliography.
120. Pliny, *Natural History* 13.21. On the topic of erasure as it pertains to the technical details of word processing and the metaphors of wax and parchment in ancient thought, see especially Small 1997 and Butler 2011. On the materiality of Martial's epigrams, see in particular Roman 2001; for a comparative treatment on similar issues in Posidippus, see Elsner 2014.
121. Reed 1972.
122. See especially Cameron 2004 and 2010.
123. Rose 2013.
124. Rose 2013, 288. Cf. Müller 2003, 432, who observes that Augustine employs the cognomen Maro when introducing specific citations.
125. On this point, Augustine's words strongly echo those of Cicero, who had long ago blamed the belief in the familiar cast of underworld characters—Cerberus, Tantalus,

- Sisyphus, and so on—on the monstrosities of poets and painters (*poetarum et pictorum*). Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.6.11.
126. Augustine, *Sermones* 241.5 (=PL 38, 1135–1136), trans in Hill 1990. Cf. Panayotakis 2008, 196.
 127. Significantly, Augustine complains elsewhere that pantomime dancers almost seem to speak with their eyes alone: Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.4.5; cf. Zanobi 2008, 235.
 128. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 124 (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 36), as translated and discussed in Camille 1994. Cf. Kendrick 1999.
 129. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.450.
 130. On the postmortem condition of the dead and its mythologization, see especially Tertullian, who in his Apology (15.5) criticizes the cruelty of mythological role-play using such imagery in the punishments meted out in the gladiatorial arena: “We have laughed . . . at Mercury using his burning iron to see who was dead. We have seen Jove’s brother, too, hauling out the corpses of gladiators, hammer in hand.” On these so-called “fatal charades,” see especially Coleman 1990.
 131. Cicero, *On Invention* 1.47.
 132. Cicero, *On Invention* 1.30.
 133. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, in Bett 2005, 2.152–153.
 134. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 2.254.
 135. Cf. Deleuze 1990, 148–153.
 136. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 2.255.
 137. Augustine, *Sermones* 66.1, in Schaff 1888, 456. Cf. Sanlon 2014, 121–146; and O’Collins 2017, 1–31.
 138. On this point, see especially Rist 2014, 24–26, 36; and Rist 2001, 26–39.
 139. Augustine, *De spiritu et littera* 30.54; *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2.5.

EPILOGUE

1. Payne and Lewis 1989, 61.
2. Jones 2001, 145–186.
3. Tybjerg 2003. I follow Jones 2001 in recognizing the author of this text as Ps-Ptolemy, although others, including Schmidt 1900 and Tybjerg 2003, have assigned it to Hero of Alexandria.
4. Nelson 2000.
5. On this and other issues in ancient optics, see especially Smith 2015.
6. Ps-Ptolemy, *De Speculis* 24.28 (Jones 2001, 178–179).
7. On the history of the text and its various editions, see Jones 2001, 145–147.
8. Schmidt 1900, 357, figs. 91a–b.
9. Netz 1999.
10. Schmidt 1900, 357. On phantasmagoria, see especially Andriopoulos 2013; Castle 1988; Cray 1990, 132–133; Elcott 2016a, 77–134; Gunning 2004 and 2007; Warner 2006; and

- Wild 2015, 23–61. On the complex etymology of the word itself and its various uses and abuses, see Gunning 2004, 1ff.
11. See especially Steinmeyer 2003, 19–43.
 12. Jones 2001.
 13. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.37.7. On the phenomenological properties of this mirror and its capacity for staging religious epiphanies, see especially Vernant 1991, 141–142; and Platt 2011, 222–224.
 14. As Vernant observes, the word is a doublet of *amauros* that describes a nocturnal ghost in the *Odyssey* (4.824).
 15. Gell 1832, 1:78; cf. Castle 1988, 44.
 16. Brewster 1832, 17; cf. Gunning 2007, 109.
 17. Combining elements of its etymology in both the magic lantern shows and subsequently Marxist ideology, Theodor Adorno famously defined phantasmagoria in the context of Wagner's productions as "the occultation of production by means of the outward appearance of the product . . . Its perfection is at the same time the perfection of the illusion that the work of art is a reality *sui generis* that constitutes itself in the realm of the absolute without having to renounce its claim to image the world." Adorno 2005, 74.
 18. Wild 2015, 23–61; Elcott 2016a and 2016b. Elcott distinguishes (modern) "artificial" darkness from (ancient) "quotidian" darkness that since Aristotle, he asserts, was equated with "absence and negation" and by extension the color black. For Aristotle, however, darkness (*skotos*) was irreducible to color understood as mere pigment. It is true that Aristotle defined darkness as the privation of light. But privation in this special sense is not simply negation. Rather, it reveals the potentiality for seeing itself—a potentiality that Aristotle links to his concept of the medium as a diaphanous interval that facilitates the transmission of sensory information. In my view, the most important distinction between ancient and modern darkness has to do with basic differences in theories of vision as well as the emergence of Newtonian optics that served as the foil for Goethe's Aristotelianism.
 19. On this point, see especially Agamben's discussion of Aristotle observations on darkness as "potentiality." Agamben 1999a, 180ff.
 20. Simon 1987, 319.
 21. Gunning 2007, 110.
 22. On the ideological uses of the phantasmagoria and of spectrality more generally, see especially Adorno 2005, 74–85; Castle 1988; Derrida 1994; Mitchell 1986, 185ff; Gunning 2004, 7ff; Žižek 2004, 1–33. For the original discussion, see Marx 1906, 1:83. Oddly, Derrida explicitly makes reference to Marx's dissertation, yet invokes only its connection to Hamlet that serves his immediate purposes: Derrida 1994, 132.
 23. According to the *OED*, the word "spectrality" dates back at least to 1850 in the writings of Thomas Carlyle. More recently, a robust body of scholarly literature on the topic of the ghost as a theoretical motif (what Colin Davis has aptly characterized as a "minor academic industry") has drawn explicitly from the philosophy of Jacques Derrida. Al-

though the figure of the ghost haunts the entire span of Derrida's considerable output, the two most important books in this broader field of critical inquiry are *Specters of Marx* [1993] 1994 and his conversations with Bernard Stiegler in *Echographies of Television* [1996] 2002. For an introduction to the various perspectives on the topic, see especially Sprinker 1999 and Blanco and Peeren 2013.

24. Crary 2013.
25. On the anecdote about Balzac, see Nadar 2015, 4–5; cf. Cadava 1997, 137. The literature on spirit photography is vast, but see especially the excellent collection of essays (in conjunction with the exhibition) in Cheroux 2005. On the issue of ancient belief, Gunning, for example, asserts that “Premodern practices and beliefs were now reinterpreted from an optical point of view, with a typically modern hermeneutic of suspicion” (Gunning 2007, 109). Yet, as I hope to have shown, the ancients too were intensely concerned with such matters as optics and the veridicality of perception, even if these were necessarily embedded in different historical forms of life. Belief surely mattered, but it was one concern out of many. It is also significant that the majority of ancient tropes in the phantasmagoria were grounded in Egyptian or Mesopotamian rather than Greco-Roman antiquity, a trope that corresponds both to modern fashions such as Egyptomania as well as to *ancient* Orientalizing stereotypes about magic and its practitioners in ancient Greece and Rome.
26. Castle 1988, 52.
27. Castle 1988, 59. Cf. Crary 1990, 133.
28. See chapter 3.
29. Clark 2010, 12.
30. See especially Ewald 2003 and 2012; cf. Zanker and Ewald 2012, 247–266; Dresken-Weiland 2005, 106–131.
31. See my introduction. Cf. Ewald 1999, 199.
32. See especially McCorristine 2010.
33. I borrow the concept of a “material support” of belief from Bernard Stiegler, who asserts: “We are in such a period [of technical innovation] with regard, in particular, to images and sounds, the material supports of the bulk of our *beliefs*. Like Thomas, we believe what we see or hear: what we perceive. But today, we perceive, most of the time, through the intermediary prostheses of perception. This means that the *conditions in which our beliefs are constituted* have entered into a phase of intense evolution.” Derrida and Steigler 2002, 149. Cf. Žižek 2001, 51–53.
34. See the collection of essays in Galbraith 2015.

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